

NOAH AND THE NEW BEGINNING (PART 2): GOD ESTABLISHED A NEW COVENANT WITH MAN — THE NOAHIC COVENANT GENESIS 09:08–17

Introduction

The flood was the most horrible of tragedies. Every living thing upon earth was wiped out except one small family — eight persons — and a boat load of animals. The trauma of witnessing such a scene must have been one of the most terrifying experiences possible.

- => Imagine the trauma of living through a torrential rain that lasted 40 days and 40 nights — never a break in the rain — a rain so heavy and thick that a person could not see his hand in front of his face.
- => Imagine the trauma of experiencing all the subterranean waters breaking loose from volcanic eruption after volcanic eruption, all the subterranean waters lying right underneath the crust of the earth bursting loose, shooting upward, and rushing madly about flooding the earth (Gen 7:11).
- => Imagine the trauma as the fact gradually dawned upon Noah and his dear family: their family was the only surviving family upon earth. All others had perished because they had cursed God, rejected and rebelled against Him, and refused to follow and obey Him.
- => Imagine the trauma of living upon the boat for a whole year, of having a whole year to think about righteousness, sin, death and the judgment of God.
- => Imagine the trauma of knowing that you are a sinner and that God judges sin, judges sin beyond any question. Noah knew this. How then could he know that God would not rise up and judge him and his dear family when they sinned in the future, judge them as He had just done all other sinners? The trauma of such attacking thoughts must have stricken the survivors with terror.

Left only to themselves, Noah and the survivors would have been terrified; they would have lived in constant fear and terror. But they were not left to themselves: God was with them. God loved Noah and his dear family, loved them because they had trusted Him and were true followers of God.

- => God cared about them, about their needs. God knew about their apprehension and fear, knew about the uneasiness, uncertainty and insecurity that often attacked their hearts.
 - => God knew that Noah and his dear family needed one thing above all else: assurance — the assurance that the terrifying tragedy of the flood would never again take place. They needed to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they and their seed would survive and replenish the earth. This assurance is just what God gives. This is the great subject of this passage: *Noah and the New Beginning (Part 2): God Established a New Covenant with Man.*
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- I. The author of the covenant (v. 8).
- II. The recipients of the covenant (vv. 9-10).
- III. The covenant itself (v. 11).
- IV. The sign of the covenant: the rainbow (vv. 12-16).
- V. The assurance of the covenant: God and His Word (vv. 17).

I. *Genesis 09:08 The Author of the Covenant*

Note the author of the covenant. The author is God and God alone. Usually a covenant is an agreement between two parties. Each party agrees to do something; thereby a covenant of behaviour is established between them. But not in this case, not in the Noahic covenant. In this covenant — the Noahic covenant — the promise of God will be fulfilled no matter what Noah and the rest of mankind do. This is what might be called...

- a one way covenant
- an unconditional covenant
- a covenant of promise
- a covenant of grace

Neither Noah nor any other person has to do anything in order to receive this promise of God. The Noahic covenant is an unconditional covenant, a covenant of promise, a covenant of grace, a covenant that is established and set up by God no matter how man behaves. God and God alone established the Noahic covenant. Note how clearly this is brought out:

- => “behold, I establish my covenant” (v. 9).
- => “I will establish my covenant” (v. 11).
- => “The covenant which I make” (v. 12).
- => “I will remember my covenant” (v. 15).
- => “The covenant, which I have established” (v. 17).

(See *Covenant*, Gen 2:15-17.)

Again, this covenant — the Noahic covenant — is established by God and by God alone. No man had anything to do with setting up this covenant or promise of God.

II. *Genesis 09:09–10 The Recipients of the Noahic Covenant*

Note the recipients of the covenant. God gave this promise, this covenant...

- to Noah and his sons
- to their seed or descendants. (Remember, the word seed is the Biblical term for descendant and refers to all the descendants of Noah. This means that the Noahic covenant was given to the whole human race, for Noah stood at the head of the

human race, as the father of all who were yet to be born upon the earth. All the seed — all of the human race — are traced back to Noah. But also remember this most important fact: when the word seed is used in connection with the promises or covenants of God, it is singular and refers primarily to the promised Saviour or Messiah of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Scripture itself tells us this [see Gal 3:16])

- to all animals

This is a most wonderful fact: it means that the Noahic covenant is given to every living being upon earth, both man and animal. It means that we who live today — all of us — are the recipients of the Noahic covenant. These great promises of God are given to us and to all our children, even those who are yet to be born. These great promises are even given to the animals of the earth. What are the promises? What is the Noahic covenant established by God with us and the earth? This is the discussion of the next point.

III. *Genesis 09:11 The Noahic Covenant, The Promises*

Note the covenant itself. There were at least two, perhaps three, parts to the covenant.

1. The covenant was God's own personal covenant, a covenant that already existed, that God had already established with man. This is seen in three facts.
 - a. God called the covenant "My covenant." The words "my covenant" point to a covenant that already existed, that had already been established. (*The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 143.)
 - b. Note the word *established* (qum). The Hebrew word can mean *to fulfil, to carry out, to continue, or to keep* (Victor Hamilton. *The Book of Genesis*, p. 316.). God could be saying that He was fulfilling and carrying out His own personal covenant, the covenant already established with man.

Now, to what covenant was God referring? There was only one major covenant existing prior to Noah: the covenant of *the promised seed* which had first been given to Adam.

Keep in mind the terrifying experience Noah had been through and his great need for assurance, his great need to feel safe and secure. God was now giving Noah great assurance, assuring Noah that he was counted godly and acceptable to God. In addition, God was reminding Noah of the earlier promise He had made, that Noah was to be a direct descendent of *the promised seed*, that he and his seed were to be the godly line through whom the Saviour of the world was to come. (See note, Gen 6:18.)

- c. There is a third fact that points to *the promised seed* being a part of God's covenant with Noah. Standing there, Noah was the only living father upon earth. All other fathers had been destroyed in the flood. Noah stood as the father — the head — of the whole human race, as the father of all succeeding generations. It is almost impossible,

if not totally impossible, to think that God would not cover His great promise with Noah, the promise or covenant of *the promised seed*, of the coming Saviour to the world. God loves man too much — loved Noah too much — not to give the only surviving man upon earth the great assurance of salvation, the great hope of the coming Saviour. God had given the assurance of *the promised seed* to Adam right after Adam had experienced his terrifying fall into sin. Why not now give the same assurance to Noah right after his terrifying experience?

The evidence of the verse points strongly to God doing just this. When God said, “I will establish [fulfil, continue, and carry out] — *my covenant* with you,” He was most likely talking about the covenant of *the promised seed*. When Noah heard these words, his heart must have been flooded with great peace and security, for he knew...

- that he was acceptable to God
- that God was looking after and caring for him in a very special way
- that God had chosen him for a great purpose, that of bearing *the promised seed*, the line through whom the Saviour of the world would come

2. The covenant was also the promise to never again destroy the earth with a universal flood. The great Pulpit Commentary says this is but an enlargement of the covenant of *the promised seed* (the Adamic covenant). The covenant with Noah assures the continuation of the earth and of man so that God can fulfil His covenant of *the promised seed*. (*The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 143.). The promise of the seed necessitated a safe earth for the survival and continuation of the human race. People had to survive upon earth for God to fulfil His covenant with Adam and Eve, the promise to send the Saviour to the world.

Note that this part of the covenant with Noah said two things:

- => Never again will *all flesh* — all life — be destroyed by a universal flood.
- => Never again will *the earth* itself be destroyed by a universal flood.

Noah could ask for no greater assurance, no greater safety and security than this. As has been seen in the Introduction, Noah needed great assurance, for the flood had been a terrifying experience for him and his dear family (see *Introduction note*, Gen 9:8-17). God knew that they needed assurance to feel safe and secure as they marched forth into the new world. Noah needed to feel perfectly safe and secure...

- in order to function as a normal human being, emotionally stable and settled
- in order to fulfil the will and purpose of God for man and the earth
- in order to carry on life to the fullest

God knew that Noah needed this kind of assurance, this kind of emotional security. This is the very reason God established this great covenant with Noah:

- => a covenant that promised never again to destroy the earth with a universal flood.

=> a covenant that was to fulfil and continue God's own personal covenant with man, the great promise of *the promised seed*, the Saviour of the world.

Thought 1. Remember, this covenant was given to the whole human race, to us all. We can have the same assurance, the same emotional safety and security that Noah experienced.

- 1) We can have assurance, feel safe and secure, that the earth will never again be judged and destroyed by a universal flood nor by any other worldwide disaster. Natural disasters will happen on a local basis: people and property will be destroyed here and there by floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, famine and other natural disasters. But a universal flood — a worldwide natural disaster — will never again wipe out every living soul upon earth, not until the end time, the final judgment of the earth. People will be upon the earth as long as the earth stands.
- 2) We can have assurance, feel safe and secure, that *the promised seed* has come. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. Jesus Christ will do for us what He did for Noah: save us both now and eternally, save us from sin and death. But, just as a drowning man has to call and then reach up for someone to save him, so we have to call and reach up for the Lord. We have to call upon the Lord to save us; we have to take the hand of the Saviour and follow Him in order to be saved. *The promised seed*, the Lord Jesus Christ, does not automatically save us. We choose whether or not to be saved; we choose whether or not to let Him save us. We can have assurance, feel safe and secure, if we call upon Him and let Him save us..

Mat 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

John 3:17-18 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 2:21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Rom 10:13 For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Chr 16:8 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

Joel 2:32 And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.

- 3) We can have assurance, feel safe and secure, against the terrible day of judgment to come, the judgment of the end time. We can know that we have eternal life, that we shall never die, but that we shall live with God forever and ever.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:17 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

John 12:25 “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

1 John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

3. The covenant might also include the points covered in the New World Order established by God in the former outline (see outline and notes, Gen 9:1-7). Many commentators do include the provisions covered there in the Noahic covenant.

⇒ The regulation of seasons (Gen 8:22 see Gen 9:11).

⇒ The mission of man: to repopulate the earth (Gen 9:1, 7).

⇒ The supremacy of man: to rule over the earth (Gen 9:2).

⇒ The provision of food for man (Gen 9:3-4).

⇒ The establishment of human government and of capital punishment (vv. 5-7).

In summary, note that God’s covenant covers only a universal flood, not a local flood here and there upon earth. There have been and still will be local floods that destroy both lives and property so long as we live in a corruptible world where nature sometimes runs wild.

Note also that the Noahic covenant stands as strong evidence against all local flood theories. The local flood theories hold that *The Great Flood* was a local flood that covered only Noah’s local community or some larger but limited area. But note this: the covenant spelled out in verse eleven deals with a universal flood or else it is meaningless. How could the covenant be a promise that there would never again be a local flood to destroy the earth? There have been many local floods and many lives and properties destroyed by local floods down through history. As stated, the covenant itself gives evidence — strong evidence — that *The Great Flood* was just that, a great flood, a universal flood that wrecked the whole earth.

IV. *Genesis 09:12–16 The Sign of the Covenant, the Rainbow*

Note the sign of the covenant, the rainbow.

1. The rainbow is a sign given to all generations. It was not just a sign given to Noah and his family; it was a sign given to all of us, to all generations of people.
2. The rainbow is a sign set in the clouds by God Himself, set there for the purpose of being a sign of His great covenant with Noah and mankind.
 - a. Note that the rainbow is set in the clouds by God Himself. God Himself created the laws of nature that caused the rainbow to form. Picture a thunderstorm, the kind that usually comes in late afternoon in most lands. Imagine its thunderous roar and flashing lightning, the apprehension — sometimes fear — that strikes most hearts because of its dangerous winds and lightning. The rainbow appears after the storm when the rays of sunlight break through the clouds and the most beautiful colours are reflected in the breaking clouds, colours that form a bow across the sky.

The rainbow is a sign — a promise — set in the clouds by God Himself. The laws of nature that cause the rainbow to form were established and set in motion by God.

But, when did the rainbow first appear? After the flood or before the flood? Did *The Great Flood* cause violent changes in the atmosphere and cloud formations of the earth?

⇒ If so, then the rainbow most likely appeared first in the days of Noah.

⇒ If not, then the rainbow most likely already existed, and God simply pointed to it and made it a sign. God would simply be giving it a new meaning, a new significance, in the eyes of man.

- b. Note that the rainbow is a sign that God will never again destroy the earth with a universal flood, a sign given to all generations (v. 12). The fact that God gave a sign to back up his covenant shows just how terrorized Noah was. Again, just imagine having witnessed the destruction of the whole earth by a torrential rain and the volcanic eruption of all the subterranean waters of the earth. Imagine your thoughts of God, of sin, and of judgment — how you would cry out for mercy — as you float around upon the waters in a barge-like boat for a whole year. Then imagine standing upon the earth alone, with no one except your own small family of eight persons. All of your friends and neighbours — all of your fellow human beings and all animals — were drowned and gone. Only you and your small family survived. Terror, fear, apprehension, wondering and questioning would fill your soul and being. This was Noah. This was the reason he needed assurance from God. Noah was just what we would have been, literally terrorized. He needed to be reassured time and again by God that he would not suffer the judgment of God, never again, not like he had just witnessed.

This is what God was doing with the rainbow: giving Noah a double assurance of safety and security. God had just given him the assurance of His covenant of

promise; now God, in mercy, gave Noah a double assurance, a sign that he nor his seed (descendants) would ever again experience the judgment of God in a universal flood. This is what the rainbow is all about: it is a sign of assurance, of safety and security, that never again will God judge the earth with a universal flood. Never again will all men be wiped off the face of the earth by a natural disaster such as the great and terrifying flood. The rainbow is God's sign — His assurance — that the earth as a whole will never again be destroyed, not until the end time. Between now and the end of the world, large masses of people will continue upon the earth and will still have time to repent and turn to *the promised seed* of God, the Saviour of the world. This is what the rainbow signifies: God's mercy upon man and the earth, God's mercy upon the corruptible earth and all the generations of sinful men.

3. The rainbow is a sign to provoke remembrance of the covenant and of the flood and its judgment by God. Note that God says He always remembers His covenant when the rainbow appears in the sky. God never forgets His covenant, but when the rainbow appears, He especially remembers the terrifying judgment of the flood and the great covenant He has made with man.

The point is this: we too should remember, but we often fail. Too often, when the rainbow appears, we just admire and point out its beauty and quickly move back to whatever we were doing. This, however, is not the purpose for which God gave the rainbow. God gave the rainbow for a sign...

- that we would remember and think upon the terrible judgment that fell upon the earth
- that we would remember His great covenant, that never again would He judge the earth with a torrential flood
- that we would remember the great mercy of God to sinful man, that He will save us if we will repent and turn to *the promised seed* and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ

4. The rainbow is a sign to provoke remembrance that the covenant is everlasting (v. 16). God will always remember this one thing:

=> as long as the earth stands, all living creatures are safe from having to face a worldwide judgment from God. Life upon earth will never be wiped out, not completely, not fully, not by a flood nor by any other natural disaster. The species of both animal and man will continue to live upon the earth until God is ready to end human history and bring all men into final judgment.

The point is this: God remembers His covenant, that it is everlasting. The rainbow is a sign that He remembers.

Thought 1. We too should remember the terrifying judgment of God, in particular this fact: we can escape the final judgment of God as long as we are still living and turn to *the promised seed*, the Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Ezek 18:21 “But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die

Joel 2:12 ‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’

Mat 3:2 And saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Luke 3:3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

V. Genesis 09:17 The Assurance of the Covenant: God and His Word

Note the assurance of the covenant: God and His Word. This is the purpose of this verse: to give Noah and us absolute assurance — perfect safety and security — that His covenant is true. Note the words, “God said.” The covenant is assured...

- by God Himself
- by God’s Word

No greater assurance could stand behind a covenant. God’s promise that He would establish (fulfil, continue, and carry out) His covenant upon earth is assured.

⇒ God has already sent the promised seed and Saviour to earth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⇒ God has not judged and destroyed the earth with a universal flood, not since Noah’s day, and He never will.

In fact, no universal judgment will fall upon the earth that will destroy all life, not until the final end and judgment of the universe. That day is coming, but until then, any person living upon the earth has the opportunity of repenting and turning to the promised seed and Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This great covenant, the Noahic covenant, is assured. It shall stand fast until the end of the world. Both God and His Word give us this assurance.

Mat 5:18 “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

Mat 24:35 *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

Psa 119:89 *Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.*

Isa 40:8 *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”*

1 Pet 1:25 *But the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you. ■*