

The Covenant with

Noah

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Teaching Series

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The Noahic Covenant

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The Noahic Covenant

I. The Background of the Noahic Covenant

1. The BIG PICTURE of Genesis 1-9:

It's good to remember that there were two absolutely cataclysmic changes that took place on the earth in the early chapters of Genesis: *the fall of Adam*; and *the flood* during the time of Noah.¹

A) *The FALL*: Before the fall, mankind was sinless and creation was untouched by the effects of sin. But when Adam fell, it wasn't just mankind that was cursed, but the earth itself (Genesis 3:17; 5:29).

B) *The FLOOD*: This was the second cataclysmic change. After the fall of man, the earth became cursed. But the flood that came upon the world also resulted in catastrophic effects on the earth.²

2. The TRANSITION PERIOD of Genesis 3-5:

A) *The Emergence of Two Lines*:

One of the things we learned from *Genesis 3:15* was that the Lord was going to put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, that is, between the children of God and the children of the Devil; between those who would trust in the coming Messiah and those who wouldn't. In *Genesis 4-5* we begin to see the fulfillment of these words. We begin to discern who are the seed of the serpent and who are the seed of God, and we begin to see the hostility between them that the Lord had spoken of. In *Genesis 4*, Cain shows himself to be of the seed of the serpent, and in the murder of his innocent brother Abel, we are pointed back to the enmity the Lord had spoken of in *Genesis 3:15*. After the death of Abel, Eve gives birth to Seth (4:25).³

¹ As Abraham Kuyper puts it: "We leave the researchers of nature's phenomena to their own speculations and calculations, although we admire their perseverance and the ingenuity wherewith they pursue their investigations, extending as far as the earth's core. The only thing of interest for our subject is that the factual condition of our earth corresponds to what Holy Scripture tells us, namely, that *our earth is no longer* what it was originally, but that *colossal cataclysms* took place on the earth's surface. Scripture records two such upheavals. In the first place, the original condition of the earth was changed immediately after *the fall*. Second, that condition underwent a colossal change through *the flood*. . . We simply cannot make a comparison with the earth *before* and *after* the curse. The world as God had originally created it at one time had perished under the curse, and an entirely different, sorrowful, and somber form of this same earth had now appeared. . . In that world thus ruptured and disheveled lived the race that had reproduced from Adam until Noah. But then followed a *second* powerful upheaval, one that in a violent manner again tore and fractured the earth that existed. This catastrophe wholly changed the earth's appearance, and it was upon that earth's surface, crushed and rearranged for a second time, that the current development of our race began after the flood." (*Common Grace*, Volume 1; Chapter 2, Sections 4-5). Kuyper goes on to declare: "Whereas this earth became what it now is through those two upheavals, Holy Scripture testifies to us both times concerning something about which the natural scientists know nothing, namely *this*, that both the first and the second upheaval were effected by *the wrath of God* against the *sin of our human race*. Once more for a third time, so this same Holy Scripture testifies, such a tremendous upheaval is awaiting us, one that will surpass both of those previous ones in terror, when 'the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved' (2Pet. 3:10)." (Chapter 2.5).

² Kuyper again says of the flood: "The traditions of the ancient peoples tell us little more than the recollection of an awesome event. And what the investigation of this earth, of its surface, of its mountains and its core have taught us thus far indicates that colossal changes have taken place, but it still lacks the graphic detail and exactitude of history. Meanwhile, this much is certain, that even if Holy Scripture had been silent about the flood, and even if the traditions of the peoples had contained no recollection of an event like this, simply observing the earth in its mountainous regions, and exploring the earth's surface in almost every country, would provide us the certainty that a massive cataclysm had taken place on this earth, one that altered the entire form of the earth and completely altered even its climatic patterns." (*Common Grace*, Volume 1, Chapter 2:3).

³ We could mention a little more about Cain and Abel here. One question: why did the Lord accept Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's? The reason doesn't seem to relate to the offering itself, whether it was on account of the *type* of offering (animals over produce) or on account of the *quality* of the offering (firstlings of the flock over normal produce). After all, if Abel was accepted before God on account of the purity of his offering, the corollary truth is that we are accepted by God as Christians on account of the purity of our devotion—something we would never want to affirm. It seems that the reason for God's acceptance of Abel's offering and His rejection of Cain's offering didn't primarily have to do with *the offering*—but with *the*

After the account of Cain and Abel, we begin to see the emergence of two distinct family lines through the genealogies recorded in Genesis 4-5: the line of *Cain* (4:16-24), and the line of *Seth* (5:1-32). We also begin to understand that these two *family lines* represent two very *different responses* to the Lord. The physical seed represents spiritual seed. Those of the line of Cain show themselves to be the offspring of the serpent, children of the devil; those of the line of Seth show themselves to be the offspring of the woman, true children of God.⁴ So, again, we see:

I) The UNGODLY Line: *Cain and his offspring (Genesis 4:16-24)*

The outcome of CAIN's line: Seven generations from Adam is LAMECH, the epitome of rebellion; a man totally hardened in heart towards marriage, life, and God (4:23-24).

II) The GODLY Line: *Seth and his offspring (Genesis 5:1-32)*

The outcome of SETH's line: Seven generations from Adam came ENOCH (“dedicated”), a godly man who was taken home to the Lord (5:21-24).

III) The Biblical STORY Line:

By the way, these two family lines representing two responses to the Lord don't stop with Lamech or Enoch. We see this reality continue to be played out throughout Genesis, and really, throughout the whole of the Scriptures. Noah, you remember, had three sons; one of them—*Ham*—showed himself to be of the seed of the serpent, while *Shem* inherits the blessing as a child of God. Abraham would later come from the line of Shem, and his sons *Isaac and Ishmael* would typify the same realities; Ishmael is called a child of the flesh, he persecutes Isaac, and he is cast out (Galatians 4:29); but Isaac is called the child of promise, and proves to be of the seed of God. Isaac likewise had two sons, *Jacob and Esau*; Esau is not a child of God; he doesn't know God, he doesn't love God; but Jacob shows himself to be of the seed of the woman; a true child of God. Many years later, Jesus would also use this same language when He told the Jews, “You are of your father the devil,” (John 8:44).

B) *The Effects of Sin and the Grace of God (Genesis 5:1-32):*

In the midst of these *two distinct lines* running through Genesis 3-5, we are also constantly confronted with *two pervasive realities*: SIN and GRACE. In particular, we see:

I) The EFFECTS of SIN: In studying the godly line of Seth in Genesis 5 we are confronted with the devastating *effects of sin*. Throughout Genesis 5, we read over and over and over again, “...and he died.” And remember—Genesis 5 was the *godly line*—these were believers. What we see here is that even the godly continue to be affected by the curse that came through Adam's sin. They're not exempt from the temporal effects of sin in this life (and neither are we).

II) The GRACE of GOD: We see God's grace, *first*, in preserving the line of Seth. Later, we'll talk more in depth about how God's covenant promises extend not only to believers, but also to their children. Well, that's exactly what we see in Genesis 5: God is preserving the line of this covenant family for generations. Enoch was a man who walked with God (5:21-24). And Noah's father, Lamech, named his son what he did through faith in the promise that God had given to Adam and Eve (5:29). So, we see that God deals with entire families in the covenant—not just with individuals. God has made promises, not just to us, but to our entire covenant line after us.

offerer: “the Lord had regard *for Abel* and for his offering; but *for Cain* and for his offering He had no regard.” (Genesis 4:4-5). Abel's offerings were accepted because Abel himself had entered into the favor of God through faith in Christ. Cain, on the other hand, was evidently living at enmity with God, refusing the offer of free grace and the necessity of the new birth. It's noteworthy though, that Cain was religious—religious enough to believe in God and present offerings to Him. But his religion couldn't save him. The world says: “Worship God whatever way you choose.” But God says something very different indeed.⁴ When Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord” (Genesis 4:16) and headed east, he left behind his covenant family, which also functioned as the first church on earth. The emphasis isn't that Cain now simply lived in a different location; the point is that Cain has now left the believing community to forge his own path in the world apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:19).

We also see God displaying His grace in another way. In Genesis 4:26 we read, “Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” This took place during the days of Enosh the son of Seth (4:26). Evidently, God began to pour out His Spirit in remarkable ways during the days of Enosh. Jonathan Edwards takes this to be a description of the first recorded revival in the history of the world—an outpouring of the Spirit that drew multitudes to faith in the coming Messiah.⁵

3. The IMMEDIATE CONTEXT of Genesis 5-6:

A) *The Lineage of Noah and the Preface to the Flood* (Genesis 5):

It's good to remember that even though Genesis 5 is a short chapter, it covers the span of over 1,500 years. Let that sink in a bit. It's easy to think of Noah coming right after Adam, but even if we assume there are no gaps in the Genesis 5 genealogy,⁶ the flood came 1,656 years after God had created Adam. So, Genesis 5 is a short chapter in our Bible but covers a great deal of time.

I) METHUSELAH (5:25): Yes, he was the oldest man recorded in Scripture, living 969 years; but there is more here. His name means, “When he is dead it shall be sent.” And when does he die? Add 187 (5:25) + 182 (5:28) + 600 (age of Noah at the flood; 7:6) = 969. Pretty amazing!⁷

II) LAMECH (5:28): “Overthrower,” probably an allusion to Genesis 3:15 and the promise of the Coming One who would overthrow the work of the serpent. It's also pretty amazing to note that Lamech was 56 years old when Adam died. Adam died 126 years before Noah was born.

III) NOAH (5:29): “Rest.” Noah's name reflects the Sabbath rest that God would give His people in salvation. Noah himself would be a picture of that rest in several ways, as we'll see.⁸

B) *The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men* (Genesis 6:1-4):

Bible interpreters have been baffled by Genesis 6:1-2. What in the world are these verses talking about? Who are the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” described in this passage?⁹

I) UNLIKELY Interpretations:

a) *Fallen angels who had sexual relations with women.* Some take this position because the language of “sons of God” is used in the Old Testament to refer solely to angels (Job 1:6).¹⁰

b) *Tyrannical kings who kept large harems.* Others take this position, largely because civil magistrates are sometimes called *elohim* (“gods”) in the Old Testament (Psalm 82:6).¹¹

⁵ Edwards traces this theme through much of the Old Testament, particularly through the historical books. He wrote of Genesis 4:26: “[It] was the first remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God that ever was. There had been a saving work of God on the hearts of some before; but now God was pleased to bring in a harvest of souls to Christ” (*History of Redemption*).

⁶ It's not completely certain whether there are generational gaps in the genealogy or not. John Collins notes that the genealogy of Moses in Exodus 12:40-41 was most certainly shortened, and our Savior's genealogy was definitely shortened in Matthew 1:8. It's possible there are no gaps in the genealogy but it's just hard to know for certain either way.

⁷ Thomas Goodwin points this out in his study of the Noahic Covenant: “Look as God inspired his great prophet Enoch, to give his son Methuselah a name that foretold the flood, and the year of the coming of it, being by interpretation, *he dieth, the emission, or dart cometh*, meaning the flood. Enoch, being a prophet, foretells this his son should die, and then the flood should be emitted; and therefore our days, as Methuselah's were, are appointed and set. . .” (Goodwin, Works, V9, p46).

⁸ Again, as Goodwin puts it: “. . . in like manner God inspired Noah's father with a name, which foretold the restoring of the earth from that curse, even from Adam, all along due to it, from the flood; and for the giving both the earth, and a new world of inhabitants, rest in it again, by that Noah, who was then born unto him; thus Genesis 5:29.” (Works, V9, p46).

⁹ Information for this section gleaned from Ligon Duncan *Covenant Theology* course.

¹⁰ Those who hold this view also appeal to passages such as 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7. But there are several arguments against it: *First*, there is no other reference to angels in this context (of Genesis 1-6). *Secondly*, the language “take wives” (v2) is the standard OT expression for marriage. *Third*, Jesus said that the angels do not marry (Matt.22:30; Mk.12:25; Lk.20:34-35). *Fourth*, the Jude passage is talking about fornication and not marriage, but this passage is clearly talking about marriage.

¹¹ These magistrates are called “gods” in the sense that they were to reflect God's image in their ruling. Against this interpretation, we would ask: *first*, how would this relate to the context—why would Moses all of a sudden insert this into Genesis 6? *Secondly*, why would you express kingship so cryptically in this passage? IE, Why not just say “kings”?

II) LIKELY Interpretation:

c) *The believing line of Seth intermingling in marriage with the unbelieving line of Cain:* There are three main arguments for this view: *First*, the concept of a godly line and of an ungodly line has been established in the immediate context of Genesis 4-5. The line of Seth and the line of Cain are deliberately traced. *Secondly*, the concept of sonship based on divine election is an important Old Testament theme. Scripture calls believers the children of God (1 John 3:1); God is our Father. So when the language “sons of God” is used, it refers to those who are a part of the line of promise—the seed of the woman. *Third*, there are warnings about marriages between believers and unbelievers throughout the Pentateuch and the Old Testament Scriptures in general.¹² So it makes sense why Moses would include this in the Genesis account: it's not just a piece of random information—he's giving us a warning.¹³

II. An Overview of the Noahic Covenant

*The covenant with Noah is the first manifestation of the Covenant of Grace after the gospel promise God had given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. To review, here's where we are in redemptive history:

I. The Covenant of Works with Adam

II. The Genesis 3:15 promise of a Redeemer:

- A) *The Noahic Covenant*
- B) The Abrahamic Covenant
- C) The Mosaic Covenant
- D) The Davidic Covenant
- E) The New Covenant

*The first usage of “covenant” in the Bible is found here in God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18). Yet that very usage implies the continuation of a previous covenant. The Hebrew phrase “to cut a covenant” is often used to describe the *initiating* of a covenant for the first time, but the phrase here in Genesis 6:18 implies the *confirming* or *continuing* of a previous covenant. Thus, it seems that God is confirming to Noah the same promise of redemption He had given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.¹⁴

*The first usage of the word “grace” is also found here in the context of God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:8). Later, we'll talk more in detail about what implications this has for understanding who Noah was and why God chose to save him. But for now, we can simply note the fact that God chose to use the word “grace” for the very first time in Scripture *in connection with His covenant* with Noah. And what this teaches us is that God's *grace* is intimately bound together with His *covenant*.¹⁵ In particular, God's *covenant* with fallen man is rooted in grace—and His *grace* is administered through His covenant.

*There are actually *two manifestations of God's covenant* that take place over the course of Genesis 6-9. The Lord first *establishes* His covenant with Noah (and only Noah) before the flood in Genesis 6:18, then after the flood in Genesis 9 He *confirms* His covenant—not just to Noah—but also to his sons, and indeed, to everything that comes out of the ark.¹⁶ We'll talk about the significance of the animals later.

¹² Esau's marriage in Genesis 26; the actions of Jacob's sons in Genesis 34; the warning of Solomon, etc etc.

¹³ In that this was, it seems, *the* major event that led to the wide-scale corruption that had filled the earth by the time of Noah.

¹⁴ Insight gleaned from Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology*.

¹⁵ As Thomas Goodwin observes: “It is greatly observable, that in the sacred story Noah was the first of the sons of men unto whom God ever spoke of a covenant. There was promise indeed of Christ, the woman's seed, uttered before, which all the patriarchs before the flood lived upon; but under the title of a *covenant* never no mention, no, nor of the word *grace* till now. Noah had the first honor of both these expressions, grace and covenant.” (Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p45). And as Cammenga puts it: “it is in connection with the revelation of God's covenant with Noah that for the first time the word 'grace' appears on the pages of Holy Scripture. Genesis 6:8, 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' Striking it is that the first use of the term 'covenant' occurs in conjunction with the first use of the term 'grace.' . . . it is in connection with God's establishment of the covenant with Noah that Scripture for the first time makes explicit mention of God's grace.” (Cammenga, *Cosmic Grace*).

¹⁶ The Noahic Covenant is one and the same covenant, that is first *established* with Noah alone, then afterwards *confirmed* to everything that comes out of the ark. Thomas Goodwin understands the two manifestations of the Noahic Covenant as fitting

*As we study through the Noahic Covenant, it will become especially important for us to see both the *temporal* and *eternal* components of the covenant. God makes *temporal promises* to Noah and his seed: He promises Noah deliverance from the flood, and afterwards, He promises to never destroy the earth again with a flood. These are *temporal promises* that God makes. But behind them are *eternal realities*—things that God wants to teach us about Himself and about the gospel; about the Covenant of Grace. Ultimately, God's covenant with Noah is in the Scriptures to illustrate and teach us about salvation.¹⁷ It's understanding this principle that will help to keep us away from the error we'll be examining below.

III. Addressing the Debate about the Noahic Covenant

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO KUYPER'S VIEW: Before we really get into studying this covenant with Noah, we need to spend a little time learning about and responding to a view that actually *denies* that God's Covenant here with Noah was one of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. Indeed, the proponents of this view see God's covenant with Noah as something actually quite different.

2. A SUMMARY OF KUYPER'S VIEW: Abraham Kuyper is the best known proponent of the view that the covenant with Noah doesn't belong to the Covenant of Grace.¹⁸ Kuyper was, among many other things, a Dutch Reformed theologian. And he wrote many things, among which was a massive 3-volume discourse on the doctrine of common grace. Significantly, he actually began this treatise by writing around one hundred pages on God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9.¹⁹ Kuyper believed that God's covenant with Noah did not belong to the Covenant of Grace, but was something entirely different.²⁰ For Kuyper, God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 doesn't teach us about *redeeming grace*—rather, it teaches us about *common grace*.²¹ For him, the covenant with Noah doesn't consist of *gospel promises*

together in this way: “[The Lord] had established two covenants with Noah, both before and after them waters; whereof the first prefigured some eminent pieces of the covenant of grace; the other signified other particulars thereof, and in a special manner the stability of it; and therefore it was they were two in a figure, because no one figure is sufficient to signify the whole; and therefore God revealed it at those sundry times, by parts, but yet so as in their tendency both served to be figures of that covenant; for so the covenant of grace is, which is but one, and is therefore styled in the singular, the covenant of his peace, but typified forth by those two of Noah's, which in that respect do coalesce in one.” (Works, V9, pp57). Again, he says: “there being two covenants made with Noah about his waters (as they are called), differing in this, that the first was with promise to save him in the waters which were inevitably decreed to come upon the world for their destruction; the other only to secure him, that they should not any more return to drown him and the earth. . .Noah's two covenants were both of them for his salvation from the waters, but with this difference: the first was with this promise, to save him from those present waters that did drown the rest of the earth; the second, to preserve him, and the earth for his sake, from any more such a flood of waters its coming upon the earth, and so to secure him from all fears of destruction thence. . .” (Goodwin, Works, V9, pp61,63). It may also be that there is one more lesson to learn through these two manifestations of the Noahic Covenant. As we said above, Scripture makes clear that the covenant in Genesis 6 is with Noah alone; while the covenant in Genesis 9 is extended to everything that comes out of the ark. This is drawn out through the use of the Hebrew second-person pronouns, which are singular throughout chapters 6 through 8, but become plural in chapter 9. In light of this, we might say that the first covenant with Noah in Genesis 6 is, among other things, also highlighting truths concerning the *Covenant of Redemption* (the covenant only being made between God and Noah), while the second covenant in Genesis 9 is especially highlighting truths concerning the *Covenant of Grace* (being made with Noah's seed in and through Noah). We'll cover this more under *Noah's Headship*.

¹⁷ See Thomas Goodwin, who argues for this extensively and convincingly in his *Works V9, pp41-80*. Much of the material I have here on the Noahic Covenant is made up of re-hashed insights from Goodwin. His work on the Noahic Covenant is an absolute hidden treasure; I would recommend it more highly than anything else I have read on the Noahic Covenant.

¹⁸ See Ronald Cammenga's article: *Common Grace or Common Grace*, p2. Cammenga makes clear that Kuyper did not invent the view, but was responsible for introducing this view into the Dutch Reformed Churches (and by doing so, in large measure, also became responsible for introducing the view to the church as a whole). He notes that before Kuyper had popularized the view, Wilhemus A' Brakel, a leading theologian in the Dutch Reformed church, had held this view. Herman Bavinck, a contemporary (and co-laborer) of Kuyper's, also shared Kuyper's view of the covenant with Noah, and later Louis Berkhof expressed the same general sentiments, with the result that, as Cammenga says: “A large portion of the Dutch Reformed church, both in the Netherlands and in the United States, as well as American Presbyterianism, has been influenced by Abraham Kuyper's teaching concerning the covenant with Noah. In fact, there appears to be an almost unquestioning acceptance of Kuyper's explanation of the Noahic covenant as a covenant of common grace among the majority of conservative Reformed and Presbyterian theologians since Kuyper's day.” (*Common or Cosmic Grace*, p3).

¹⁹ Thus also grounding this doctrine in the covenant with Noah. This he himself makes explicitly clear: “The fixed historical starting point for the doctrine of *common grace* lies in *God's establishment of a covenant with Noah after the flood.*” (2.1).

²⁰ In his words: “If [people] had recognized that the Noahic covenant is *not* redemptive, but that it applied to the life of every human being, indeed, even to the life of the animals, they would not have made the mistake of putting it on par with the other covenants. Instead, they would have treated it separately, as a covenant of an entirely different kind.” (*Chapter 5.1*).

²¹ In his words: “we are *not* dealing here with a covenant of *particular grace*, but a covenant of *common grace.*” (3.2). In defining what he means by common grace, Kuyper explains it as “a grace of God that you as a human being have in common

to God's redeemed people—rather, it consists *solely of temporal promises to all humankind*.²² Kuyper described his view with statements like this: “In this Noachic covenant there is. . .nothing that intentionally or primarily pertains to saving grace.”²³ And again he writes: “The promise. . .includes nothing spiritual whatsoever.”²⁴ Rather, Kuyper asserted: “[The] *content* of the Noachic covenant lies entirely within the sphere of *natural* life, envisions *temporal* and not *eternal* goods, and applies to unbelievers just as much as it does to those who fear God.”²⁵ So emphatic was Kuyper's position on the Noachic Covenant that he even wrote at one point: “To identify this content in a spiritual manner and to wish to explain it in a redemptive way is therefore preposterous.”²⁶ To put it simply: Kuyper's view was that God's covenant with Noah was only *natural*, not spiritual; pertained solely to the *temporal*, not eternal; was made with *all human kind*, not just believers; and therefore, cannot properly belong to the Covenant of Grace.²⁷

3. THE REASONS FOR KUYPER'S VIEW: Kuyper held to this view of God's covenant with Noah primarily for two reasons:²⁸ *First*, the covenant in Genesis 9 isn't just made with Noah, but also with his three sons with him, along with their “seed” after them (verse 9). Kuyper reasons that since all humanity would come forth from the “seed” of Noah's three sons, the covenant that God is making here in Genesis

with all people” (1.2); something “apportioned to *all* people, including the worst apostates” (1.3); and something that “is therefore of an entirely different nature from particular grace or covenant grace.” (1.3). For Kuyper, common grace refers to the “forbearance” (1.5) that God constantly shows toward sinful man, which is especially manifested in: 1) His bridling or restraining man's sin; and 2) His “bearing temporarily” with it, by preserving the order of creation until the final judgment (1.5).²² “The promise. . .includes nothing other than this. . .the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (3.3).

²³ Chapter 2, section 3.

²⁴ Chapter 3, section 3.

²⁵ Chapter 4, section 1.

²⁶ Chapter 4, section 1.

²⁷ In these beginning chapters, Kuyper is constantly citing Calvin for the view he takes of the covenant in Genesis 9. He says: “the view we have begun to present here. . .follows the older perspective of Calvin. . .Calvin says unambiguously, ‘There is no doubt that it was the design of God to provide for *all* his posterity. It was not therefore a *private* covenant. . .but one which is *common* to all people, and which shall flourish in all ages to the end of the world.’ His expression is *Foedus omnibus populis commune*, that is, ‘a covenant of grace common to all people.’ The choice of these words shows clearly that Calvin did not understand the Noachic covenant as ‘saving,’ but as pointing to God’s mercy, for the benefit of every human being, among all nations, through every age, until Christ’s return. No more words need to be devoted to arguing that we are indeed following in Calvin’s footsteps. The above quotation from his commentary should suffice and any doubts may be expelled by a close rereading of his entire exposition about the Noachic covenant.” (*Chapter 3.2*). I did, in fact, take Kuyper up on his challenge, and re-read Calvin's commentary of Genesis 6-9, and was surprised to find, that *the one sentence* Kuyper quotes (taken from 9:8) is indeed *the only place* where Calvin seems to assert what Kuyper is wanting to assert; namely, that the Noachic Covenant contains nothing spiritual and does not belong to the Covenant of Grace. On the other hand, I found in reading these chapters from his commentary, that Calvin does, in several places, seem to hint that the Noachic Covenant did indeed include spiritual truths about God's redeeming grace: 1) Calvin takes the denouncement of depravity in Genesis 6:5 as rightly applying “to the whole human race”, saying that, “it is not a mere complaint concerning a few men, but a description of the human mind when left to itself, destitute of the Spirit of God.” Thus, *their* depravity is meant to teach us about *our* depravity. 2) Of Noah's sacrifice in 8:20, Calvin says: “when the holy fathers, formerly, professed their piety towards God by sacrifices, the use of them was by no means superfluous. . .it was right that they should always have before their eyes symbols, by which they would be admonished, that they could have no access to God but through a mediator. Now, however, the manifestation of Christ has taken away these ancient shadows.” Thus, Noah's offering is indeed meant to point us to Jesus. 3) Though Kuyper asserts that God made this covenant with the entire human race, Calvin qualifies this in his own comment on 9:8, saying: “And the clause which follows, ‘and to his sons who were with him,’ is to be referred to this point. For how is it, that God, making his covenant with the sons of Noah, commands them to hope for the best? Truly, because they are joined with their father, who is, as it were, the stipulator of the covenant, so as to be associated with him, in a subordinate place.” Thus, the covenant only flowed to Noah's family, the animals, and the earth, in so far as they were connected with Noah, who stood as the covenant head (pointing to the headship of Christ). 4) Further, in his comments on 9:10, in the context of speaking of the fact that God's covenant in Genesis 9 extended also to the brute beasts, Calvin, immediately applies this truth by saying: “Hence the ignorance of the Anabaptists may be refuted, who deny that the covenant of God is common to infants, because they are destitute of present faith. As if, truly, when God promises salvation to a thousand generations, the fathers were not intermediate parties between God and their children, whose office it is to deliver to their children (so to speak) from hand to hand the promise received from God.” Thus, Calvin ties together this covenant in Genesis 9 quite specifically to the Covenant of Grace. 5) Lastly, in speaking of the significance of the rainbow, Calvin says of 9:12, “A sign is added to the promise, in which is exhibited the wonderful kindness of God; who, for the purpose of confirming our faith in his word, does not disdain to use such helps. . .By [signs] I mean. . .that which may strengthen faith. . .the Lord here plainly addresses holy Noah and his sons; he then annexes a seal, for the sake of assurance. Wherefore, if the sacrament be wrested from the word, it ceases to be what it is called. . . Hence we also infer, that from the beginning, it was the peculiar property of sacraments, to avail for the confirmation of faith. For certainly, in the covenant that promise is included to which faith ought to respond.” Thus, Calvin understands the sign of the rainbow as directly applying to the sacraments, which are the “signs” and “seals” of the Covenant of Grace. For all these reasons, I respectfully disagree with Kuyper's assessment of Calvin's view of the Noachic Covenant.

²⁸ See especially Kuyper's Chapter 3: *The Noachic Covenant Was Not Particular*.

chapter 9 does not only extend to believers, but indeed, to the entire human race. The Covenant of Grace is only made with a particular people called out from the world; but here in Genesis 9, it seems that God is making a covenant with all humanity without exception. Kuyper's question is in effect: If this covenant is also made with unbelievers, how can it be part of the Covenant of Grace? *Secondly*, noting that the covenant promises of Genesis 9 extend even to the animals, Kuyper is at a loss to understand how any covenant that involves animals can relate to the Covenant of Grace. He draws out the fact that no less than *six times*, God includes living creatures in the covenant. He also notes that this covenant seems even to extend to the earth itself (9:13). For these reasons, Kuyper concludes that this covenant in Genesis 9 cannot belong to the Covenant of Grace at all, but must indeed be something entirely different.

4. OUR RESPONSE: At first glance, Kuyper's arguments are quite convincing. And though we don't agree with his conclusions, still we've done our best to argue his case as strongly as possible, because we believe that it's important to wrestle through viewpoints that are different than ours. But in short, though Kuyper's explanation is important for us to wrestle through, we believe there's an explanation of Genesis 9 that's even more convincing; one that understands the Noahic Covenant as belonging to the Covenant of Grace. It's this view that we'll be unpacking at length over the course of this lesson. And it *will* take us the entirety of the lesson to flesh out the many reasons for why we *do* take the Noahic Covenant as belonging to the Covenant of Grace. In this respect, we ask for your patience, as it will require more time to respond fully to Kuyper's view. But as for Kuyper's two objections, we would respond in this way:

A) *Answering Kuyper's FIRST objection:* Kuyper's first objection was that God's covenant in Genesis 9 seems to be made not just with believers, but indeed with all humanity. We'll say more about this later, but for now we would just point out that Kuyper, in fact, only deals with the covenant in Genesis 9. The problem with this is that he fails to deal in any way with the covenant God made earlier with Noah in Genesis 6. This is a problem, because it is these two covenants that make up the Noahic Covenant. You can't separate them; just like you can't separate the several covenants that were made to Abraham and make up the Abrahamic Covenant. These two covenants, the one in Genesis 6, the other in Genesis 9, are inseparable. And they're inseparable, not only because they both relate to Noah, but also because God uses the same name to describe them. When God makes the covenant with Noah before the flood, in Genesis 6:18, He calls it, "My covenant." And when God makes the post-flood covenant with Noah, his sons, their seed, and the animals, He calls it by the same name: "My covenant" (9:9,11,15). So, since Genesis 6 and 9 are two manifestations of the same covenant, the essential meaning must be the same.²⁹

Now, in unnaturally separating the covenant of Genesis 6 from that of Genesis 9, Kuyper fails to realize something *really* important: The covenant that God makes in Genesis 9 isn't with all humanity *without exception*—it's rather with all humanity *inside the ark*. Remember, all humanity was actually destroyed in the flood. It was only Noah and his family that were spared—and it's with Noah and his family that God makes this second covenant in Genesis 9. So, the covenant in Genesis 9 can't be interpreted apart from the covenant God had made earlier with Noah in Genesis 6. And the covenant in Genesis 6 was about salvation from God's judgment: God saves a certain people from judgment before the flood—and God again covenants *with those same people* after the flood. So, in Genesis 9, God isn't addressing ALL people—He's addressing HIS REDEEMED people; He isn't addressing the WORLD—He's addressing those He's saved OUT OF THE WORLD; He's not addressing ALL humanity without exception—but a NEW humanity, the few that He had preserved inside the ark to come forth and inherit the new world.³⁰ This of course points us to truths contained in the Covenant of Grace. And, in this respect, this covenant in Genesis 9 is "universal" only *insofar as it applies universally to the particular ones He has redeemed*.³¹

²⁹ This connection in itself creates another problem for Kuyper's view. This phrase, "My covenant", as we learned in Lesson One, is one of the most common names for the Covenant of Grace (cf. Genesis 17:2-21; Exodus 19:5; Psalm 89:28,34). Incidentally, God also calls the covenant of Genesis 9 "the everlasting covenant" (9:16), which is also another phrase Scripture uses to refer to the Covenant of Grace (cf. Genesis 17:7-19; Psalm 105:10; Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26).

³⁰ A corollary Scripture here might be the last two verses of Isaiah: "'And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind [*Lit. all flesh*] will come to bow down before Me,' says the Lord. Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind [*Lit. all flesh*].'" The language of "all flesh" is the same language as Genesis 9, and when Isaiah talks about "all flesh" here, he's talking about people universally but in particular terms. It's clear from the passage that in the new heavens and the new earth, unbelievers don't belong to this group. This "all flesh" is quite particular. Not all humanity without distinction—but all true humanity; all redeemed humanity; the entire new humanity.

³¹ As Herman Hoeksema puts it: "However, this truth, that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations,

B) Answering Kuyper's SECOND objection: Kuyper's second objection had to do with the fact that the covenant in Genesis 9 extends even to the living creatures with Noah. Again, we'll say more about this later, but for now, just think about it this way: It wasn't just humankind that was directly effected by the fall, but the earth itself and all of creation has come to feel the effects of the curse of Adam's sin. The Lord told Adam in Genesis 3:17, "Cursed is *the ground* because of you. . ." In a sense then, it wasn't just all humanity that was cursed with Adam when he disobeyed, but also the earth itself. Likewise, Paul tells us in Romans 8:20 that *all creation* has been "subjected to futility" through the fall. Now again, think of it, when God sent the flood, in Genesis 6, who was it who perished? It wasn't just mankind. It was every living thing of all flesh. The animals perished too. Now, no one says that the animals perished in the flood because they too had become wicked. No. It was mankind alone that had become wicked. But the animals perished along with man.³² And not just the animals, but even the earth itself, for Scripture tells us specifically that when God sent the flood, it didn't just come to destroy every living creature, but also the earth with them: "behold, I am about to destroy them [all flesh] *with the earth* (6:13). So then, it was *man* alone who sinned; but both in the fall, and in the flood, *all creation* suffered the consequences.

Well, it's the same thing in the Covenant of Grace. All creation is comprehended, in a sense, in the Covenant of Grace. This is so, because the Covenant of Grace deals *primarily* with redeeming man, but it also deals *secondarily* with all creation. To put it simply: Just as all creation suffered the consequences for man's sin in the fall and the flood, so too, the healing of redemption will one day extend, in turn, to all creation. In Christ, men are coming out from under the curse of God and entering into His blessing. But the creation itself also groans for the day when it too will be set free from its corruption, when Christ ushers in the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells.³³ As Paul says in Romans 8:19-23: "For the anxious longing of *the creation* waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For *the creation* was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that *the creation itself also will be set free* from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that *the whole creation* groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And. . .even we ourselves groan. . .waiting eagerly for. . .the redemption of our body."³⁴

is more clearly expressed after the deluge. We have already made it plain that in the covenant with Noah we confront essentially no other covenant than the one covenant of grace which was already announced in general terms in Paradise, which is presently established with Abraham and his seed, and which is maintained in Christ. Noah does not enter into the ark as the representative of the whole world as it is outside of Christ, but as head of the visible church. The church is saved in the ark; the world perishes in the flood. Presently that church comes forth again from the ark; and with that church the Lord God establishes His covenant. The fact that in this connection the covenant of God is revealed as embracing the whole creation does not change matters and is easily understandable in the light of the history of the flood. A covenant of friendship with the wicked world outside of Christ God, the Holy and Righteous One, certainly could not establish. The covenant is essentially always the same. For this reason, also here Scripture does not speak of 'a covenant,' but of '*my* covenant.' That is: My one covenant, which is always the same, and which I establish with My people in Christ Jesus. And when, therefore, the Lord establishes that covenant with Noah, He says: 'And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you' (Gen.9:9). Also here, therefore, you have the same idea. When God establishes His covenant in the world, then He does that with believers and their seed." (From *Believers and Their Seed*). Thus, far from being incongruent with the Covenant of Grace, the fact that the covenant of Genesis 9 is also made with Noah's seed after him is further evidence that it indeed belongs to the Covenant of Grace, wherein God's promises extend not just to believers, but also to their seed.

³² The wording of Genesis 6:5-7 is noteworthy: it was indeed man alone who did evil, but the animals would perish with him.

³³ So, does the fact that animals were included in the covenant in Genesis 9 prove that this covenant cannot contain gospel truths? I love how Goodwin answers: "1) No more than that because the beasts and cattle came forth of Egypt with the Israelites, that therefore their redemption typified not forth redemption by Christ. And again: 2) Nor no more, than that because the cattle drank of the rock, as well as the Israelites; that, therefore, that rock was not Christ figuratively and sacramentally; which yet the apostle expressly tells us it was [in] 1 Corinthians 10." (Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p66).

³⁴ As Thomas Goodwin puts it: "Nor was that covenant made primarily, or in a direct and principal respect, with the beasts, but with Noah and his sons; and with the beasts but secondarily for his sake, and as appurtenances to man, and belonging to him; otherwise they are not capable of a covenant, because no way to be made sensible of it; and, therefore, but as an accidental appendix of man's charter, or lease granted, it is that they are put in. And, again, look as for man's sake the earth, and all things in it, were accursed, Genesis 3, and then they were destroyed for man's sake by this flood, as God professes, Genesis 6:6-7; so, on the contrary, God declares, that when he saw those creatures in the ark, that it was for his sake; and therefore this clause is twice added, Genesis 6:19-20, to keep them alive *with thee*; that is, for thy sake. And in like manner it is said, Genesis 9:1-3, 'And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things."' So as it was to preserve mankind that these creatures were preserved, and that they might have subjects to have dominion over. . . Yet further; all the creatures may well

5. CONCLUSION: Kuyper himself, as he wrote the things he did about the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, seems to acknowledge that his position was not, in fact, the majority position.³⁵ Most Reformed theologians before him and after him have affirmed that the Noahic Covenant is indeed part of the Covenant of Grace.³⁶ Now, this doesn't mean that we have to disagree with everything that Kuyper said. And we don't have to deny that there were indeed temporal elements in God's covenant with Noah. Those elements are clearly there. God made a real promise to never again flood the earth in a physical way, and that promise extends to us all. But what we're saying is that even these *temporal* elements of God's covenant with Noah were there for a much greater purpose: to teach us about things *eternal*.

This is, after all, what Scripture itself explicitly teaches us—not only as it relates to God's covenant with Noah *before* the flood in Genesis 6, but also as it relates to God's covenant with everything that came out of the ark *after* the flood in Genesis 9; for we read in Isaiah 54:9-10 God's own commentary of His covenant promise in Genesis 9: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be

be said to come under this our covenant by Christ; for we profess and believe, not only that Christ, by his death, made a purchase of all, and by his sacrifice procured the standing of the world, in order to the elect for their good, and so their preservation comes to be included in the elects' covenant and promises; but there is by Christ a liberty one day to be conferred upon the whole creation, in their being 'delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: so as in their capacity they have a share in the privileges of the new world, that world to come, typified forth by Noah's new world, and promised upon his having offered his sacrifice, wherein he was Christ's type. So that this is so far from being an objection, that it serves, on the contrary, to render the analogy more complete.” (Goodwin, *Works*, V9, Section II). Francis Roberts says: “God covenanted here with these brute creatures, not properly and directly for themselves, but improperly, indirectly and relatively, with reference and relation to mankind, that they should not any more be generally destroyed with a flood. For as at first these creatures were all made for man's use and service, and were afterwards drowned in the flood, not for their own sakes, but for man's sin; so now while man should continue in this world, God covenants that these creatures should continue also for his service and benefit.” (p259). Roberts also draws out a slightly different aspect when he later says: “That they who are spiritually and eternally saved by Christ, shall have all necessary temporal blessings superadded to them in Christ. ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Thus in the type, Noah's family was not only saved in the Ark with Noah; but also for their sakes, a seed of the living creatures were saved in the Ark with them for their after use and service. The free use of the creatures is granted to them, the earth and creatures being put under their power in subjection; and the continued course and revolution of times and seasons, without danger of being destroyed any more, by a universal flood of waters, is assured to them. So in Christ 'all are ours, the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come, all are ours; and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's.” (p280).

³⁵ He himself cites earlier Reformed theologians such as Pareus, Perkins, Maastricht, and Rivet. He could have cited several more, including Francis Roberts, who quotes some of these men at length and adds to their list Henry Ainsworth as well. Roberts quotes Rivet saying: “and though that Covenant seem only to respect this present life; yet we must ascend higher, to the thing signified. For it is the Covenant of Grace. . .” Roberts also quotes Pareus at length, who used very familiar language to describe his understanding of the Noahic Covenant; namely, in the same way as all the other Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace before the inauguration of the new covenant in Christ: these all being the same in substance as the new covenant, but different in administration. In the words of Pareus: “*A question here arises*, whether this Covenant be the same with that which we have now with God, or another different from it? I answer, it is the same, and diverse. *It is the same* in respect of eternal grace by Christ, and in respect of the obligation of moral obedience. For, this *substance of the Covenant*, that is, of the mutual stipulation of God and the elect, is the same, and perpetual in both Testaments. . .The same both now and of old is the way of salvation by Christ. *But this Covenant differs in circumstances and manner of administration*. God propounded this gratuitous Covenant in one sort to the Fathers, in another to us: 1) To the Fathers he added certain external promises: As, of preservation in the flood, to Noah; of giving the land of Canaan to Abraham; not so to us. 2) To them He gave other signs and burdens; before the flood, sacrifices; after the flood, the rainbow to Noah; circumcision to Abraham; the Passover to Moses and the Israelites; yea, sacrifices, ceremonies, festivals, and innumerable other Laws, wherein as in a cloud or dark garment the promise of grace was involved. For all the legal shadows did show Christ; but more obscurely, as when the sun is seen through the clouds. . .By reason of this diversity, the Covenant, which is but one in substance, is said to be twofold, Old and New. And the Old is abolished; because the promise of grace has put off its legal robe, wherewith it was covered of old as with a cloud. But the New is everlasting, both in substance and administration, because another change of rites and sacraments is not to be expected before the last day. . .” (from Roberts, pp274-275). Another extremely important writer before Kuyper's time who took Noah's covenant as part of the Covenant of Grace was Thomas Goodwin (*Works* V9).

³⁶ Though some after him have adopted Kuyper's position, most have not. For just a few more modern (but important) examples, we could note O Palmer Robertson (cf. his opening pages on Noah, pp109-113) and Ligon Duncan, who writes in his Covenant Theology course the very truth we will soon conclude with: “You may know that there is somewhat of a debate over the place of the covenant with Noah in redemptive history. Some people have approached the Covenant of Noah as if it were an entirely Common Grace Covenant, as if it were, in some senses, not part of the flow of the Covenant of Grace. That is, [it] would not necessarily have a saving focus, but more of a focus on the preservation of the normal order of the world. A common grace covenant. Others have disagreed with that. And I want you to see that there are both common and special aspects of grace displayed in the Covenant of Noah. *It is indeed part of the Covenant of Grace*, though it does have common grace significance as well as special redeeming or saving grace significance.” IE: the temporal is there but points to the eternal.

removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,' says the Lord who has compassion on you." As Thomas Goodwin wrote long ago: "the story of [Noah] and his waters or flood, and God's covenant with him. . . though in the letter the semblance they bear was but of the temporal salvation and deliverance from the flood, yet in the mystery thereof they were. . .intended as figures of God's eternal covenant and mercies unto his elect church, which were to come out of Noah's and his sons loins. . ." ³⁷

In the end, Kuyper's mistake was to forget that the interweaving of the temporal and the eternal is a truth that reveals itself over and over again in each successive stage of the Covenant of Grace. We learned about this in the first lesson. In each of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, the eternal is wrapped up with the outer shell of the temporal. Eternal gospel truths were wrapped, as it were, with an external husk. Gospel truths were pictured and promised in all these covenants with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David—but they were wrapped with an earthly, temporal shell. God made promises to *Abraham* of a land, a seed, and blessing; at face value these were temporal and earthly things, but they were actually gospel promises. God gave instructions to the *Israelites* concerning the tabernacle, the shedding of the blood of animals for sin, instructions about feasts throughout the year, the priesthood, and many other things. But though, strictly speaking, these things only related to the temporal and earthly, they yet conveyed gospel truths—they point us to Jesus and the gospel. God made covenant promises to *David*, that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, and that his throne would endure. Looking merely at the outside husk, these were all earthly, temporal promises. But when we pull back the husk, we begin to realize that the inward kernel was always about Christ and the gospel. This is true of each of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace: temporal and earthly on the outside; but pure gospel on the inside. And it was no different with God's promises to Noah. ³⁸

³⁷ Quote from Goodwin (*Works*, V9, p43). This was how Goodwin himself responded to the same objections, that, it seems, some also held in his own day: "And the objection is this: that that covenant with Noah, [in] Genesis 9, was but a covenant of common providence, and the concerns thereof, as that summer and winter, day and night, should not cease; yea, and was made with every living thing, as well as with Noah; and answerably had but an outward natural sign to confirm it, the waters should no more destroy the earth; and hath nothing to do with the covenant of grace, nor can be supposed to be a figure of that covenant under gospel times. For answer: As to that, that it is but a providential promise of continuance of the world from the judgment of waters any more; outwardly it was no more; but this hinders not from its being in the mystery a typical promise to Noah, and those of his seed elect that were to succeed, to signify the perpetuity of the covenant of grace to them, and that God would never suffer his lovingkindness to depart. . ." (Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p66). As Francis Roberts says: "For under the temporal and corporal salvation of Noah's family from the flood of waters, we are to understand the spiritual and eternal salvation of Christ and his family from the flood of God's wrath." (p277). And again: "God's Covenants with Noah before and after the flood, revealed not only a corporal and temporal, but also a spiritual and an eternal salvation. That corporal and temporal salvation in the ark from the flood of waters, with security to the world forever after from such a general flood, typically resembling and representing the spiritual and eternal salvation of lapsed sinners in the church by Christ from the flood of God's wrath and vengeance. . .These Covenants with Noah revealed a double salvation, an Outward Corporal and Temporal Salvation, and an Inward Spiritual and Eternal Salvation principally intended and typified thereby. This latter belongs only to the elect family of the true Noah, Jesus Christ, and to the new world planted and replenished by him spiritually. The former salvation which is but outward and corporal, from all such future floods, is (in and for the benefit of Christ's elect, and saved family) extended even to all the wicked in the world, and to brute creatures themselves." (Roberts, pp283-284). We are simply affirming the same truths about God's covenant with Noah that Vos said of *Abraham*: "The covenant with Abraham already had a double side, one that had in view temporal benefits—like the promise of the land of Canaan, numerous descendants, protection against earthly enemies—and one that had in view spiritual benefits. Nevertheless, this is to be so understood that the earthly and temporal were not for their own sake, but rather so that they would provide a type of the spiritual and heavenly. Thus the Apostle Paul can say that the spiritual promises did not apply to all the seed, but to the spiritual seed, to those included in Christ. By that he meant that the physical children of Abraham with their temporal blessings were an exemplar of the people of God who through faith receive the spiritual benefits." (Vos, V2, p128). Goodwin again appeals to God's Covenant with *David* as an example of the same truth, saying: "If it be said, that this covenant respected only the temporal salvation of Noah in the ark, besides, that it may be answered, that so did the covenant declared to David (in the first delivery of it, in 2 Samuel 7 from verse 12, and so on) speak but of his house, and establishing of his kingdom to his seed; while yet his own salvation (2 Samuel 23:5, 'God made with me a covenant, and this is all my salvation') and the salvation of the elect through Christ, was intended therein; so here, it may also be replied, that the word grace, as it is spoken of God, and to express his grace, is too deep a word to be bestowed only upon a mere temporal salvation." (*Works*, V9, p48).

³⁸ A.W. Pink has a lot to say here, so we'll end by quoting him at length: "There was connected with each covenant that which was literal or material, and also that which was mystical or spiritual; and unless this be duly noted, confusion is bound to ensue. Yea, it is at this very point that many have erred—particularly so with the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants. Literalists and futurists have been so occupied with the shell or letter, that they have quite missed the kernel or spirit. Allegorizers have been so much engaged with the figurative allusions, they have often failed to discern the historical fulfillment. Still others have so arbitrarily juggled the two, that they have carried out and applied neither consistently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we use the best possible care in seeking to distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal, what pertains to the earthly and what adumbrated the heavenly in the several covenants. . .Each covenant that God

Kuyper's main emphasis was that God's covenant with Noah served to preserve the earth for the coming of Christ and the advance of the gospel. This promise to Noah would make redemption possible, in that it would preserve the earth until God had enacted His plan of redemption. We don't disagree with this one iota. We just affirm that, while this covenant conveyed these truths—it also conveyed so much more.

So, what gospel truths in particular do we learn from the Noahic Covenant? We'll take them one by one:

1. The **BACKDROP** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn why we need salvation*
2. The **AUTHOR** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the character of God*
3. The **NATURE** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God saves sinners*
4. The **SUBSTANCE** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of what we have been given in Christ*
5. The **BASIS** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God lavishes His grace on sinners*
6. The **STABILITY** of Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the security we have in Christ*
7. The **SCOPE** of Covenant of Grace: *We learn who salvation is for*
8. The **SIGN** of Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the picture of God's promise*
9. The **FRUIT** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the heart of the Christian life*
10. The **REQUIREMENTS** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how grace and obedience fit together*
11. The **PRIVILEGE** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the mission God has given His people*
12. The **OUTCOME** of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of the sure hope we have in Christ*

IV. What we learn from the Noahic Covenant

1. The **BACKDROP** of the Covenant of Grace (Genesis 6:5,11-12): *We see why we need salvation*

These verses describe for us the condition of man in the days of Noah. We read in verse 5, “*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” The last time we read “the Lord saw” was in Genesis 1, when the Lord saw that it was good. But here, the Lord saw something very different. You can't express with words any more than Moses does here the depths of man's depravity. It's hard to imagine a more forceful statement of the wickedness of the human heart.³⁹ And what is important for us to understand is that this isn't just describing the people of Noah's day—it's talking about you and me. This is the Bible's synopsis of the human condition.⁴⁰ And we learn the following in particular:

A) Man's corruption is INWARD (v5; the intent of his thoughts). Notice that Scripture doesn't say: “Everything *that man did* was only evil continually.” The focus in verse 5 isn't on man's actions—but

made with men shadowed forth some element of the everlasting covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David as truly exhibited different aspects of the compact of grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected what was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly. This dual fact receives illustration and exemplification in the covenant which is now before us [IE, Noah]. That which was literal and external in it is so obvious and well known that it needs no enlarging upon by us here. The sign and seal of the covenant—the rainbow—and the promise connected therewith were tangible and visible things, which the senses of men have verified for themselves from then till now. But is that all there was to the Noahic covenant? . . . Was there no deeper meaning in the promises than that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood, that so long as it existed its seasons and harvests were guaranteed, that the fear of man should be upon all the lower creatures? Had those things no spiritual import? Assuredly they have, and in them may be clearly discerned—by those favored with anointed eyes—that which adumbrated the contents of the everlasting covenant. . . It was ever God's way in Old Testament times to employ the event of some temporal deliverance of His people, to renew His intimation of the great spiritual deliverance and restoration by Christ's redemption. . . From all that has been said it should now be abundantly clear that, while the literal aspect of the promises made to Noah concerned the temporal welfare of the earth and its inhabitants yet their mystical import had respect unto the spiritual well-being of the church and its members. . .” (Pink, *Divine Covenants*).

³⁹ From Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology*.

⁴⁰ It may indeed be true that Noah's generation was especially wicked, but this doesn't take away from its broader application to all humanity. As Calvin puts it: “though Moses here speaks of the wickedness which at that time prevailed in the world, the general doctrine [IE, of man's depravity] is properly and consistently hence elicited. Nor do they rashly distort the passage who extend it to the whole human race. So when David says, ‘That all have revolted, that they are become unprofitable, that is, none who does good, no not one. . .’ (Psalm 14:3), he deplores, truly the impiety of his own age; yet Paul (Romans 3:12) does not scruple to extend it to all men of every age; and with justice; for it is not a mere complaint concerning a few men, but a description of the human mind when left to itself, destitute of the Spirit of God.” (cf. Calvin's notation on *Genesis* 6:5). As Waltke also writes: “This is a vivid portrayal of the depth and comprehensiveness of human depravity” (*Genesis*, p118).

on his thoughts and motives. True religion gets past just external appearances. Some people do a lot of good things outwardly—but God alone tests the heart and motives—and this is *His* testimony of man. As Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”⁴¹

B) Man's corruption is PERVASIVE (v5; every intent. . . was only evil). Not: “some of the thoughts of his heart were evil,” but “every intent;” not: “the intentions of his heart were sometimes tainted with evil,” but the intent of his heart was “only evil continually.” Man's thoughts and motives, purposes and desires, weren't just *tainted with evil*—but *characterized by evil*.⁴² Scripture is telling us that mankind after the fall is not basically good, but fundamentally evil.

C) Man's corruption is CONTINUAL (v5; only evil continually). It didn't stop.⁴³ This wasn't describing mankind's *worst day*—it was describing mankind *every day*. And this shows us something really important: If the wickedness was continual—never ending—then it must have been because man was either *unable* to give up his wickedness, or because he was *unwilling* to give up his wickedness. Either he *couldn't* give up his sin or he *didn't want to* give up his sin. Well, Scripture tells us that the reason is actually *both*: Fallen man is both *enslaved* to his sin and *in love* with his sin. Wickedness continues because fallen man has *no power to change*, and because he has *no desire to change*.⁴⁴

D) Man's corruption is UNIVERSAL (vv11-12; all flesh had corrupted their way). “All flesh” means everyone. In Scripture, it can refer both to peoples and individuals: it can mean every *kind of people* or every *single individual*.⁴⁵ The meaning here is *both*.⁴⁶ No culture or class of people was exempt—not a single person was exempt. Everyone was corrupt. There were no exceptions.

And it's the same with us. You see, we can't understand how amazing God's grace is until we come face to face with just how wretched we are. We're not a basically good people who just need a little help. We're corrupt sin-addicts with blood on our hands. We have *no power to change* and *no desire to change*. We're enslaved to our sin, and *in love* with our sin. We can't give it up, and we don't want to. You see, every single one of us stands as guilty criminals before the God of heaven.

And this description of man's corruption isn't just meant to teach us about the fallen human condition; it also represents the potential of sin in each of our hearts: it represents what *you and I* are capable of doing—even *as believers*. John Owen said, “*Be killing sin or it will be killing you*” — and that's not just a catchy little saying—it's a life and death reality—because, as one pastor said, “There's enough evil in every single one of our hearts to destroy the world three times over.”⁴⁷ *We need Jesus to keep changing us* every day just as much as we needed Him to save us at the very beginning.

2. The AUTHOR of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the Character of God*

A) He is TENDER-HEARTED: We read of God's response to man's great wickedness in Genesis 6:6, “The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” The Hebrew word for “sorry” can also be translated as “repent” (IE, “it repented the Lord that He had made man”). Now, what this *doesn't* mean is that God made a mistake or didn't know this was coming or changed His mind. The Scriptures are clear on this: *Malachi 3:6: “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you. . . are not consumed.”*⁴⁸ This is rather an example of how sometimes in the Scriptures, human attributes or feelings are attributed to God for the sake of emphasis.

⁴¹ As one preacher put it: “Your manners may have acquired a courtly polish; your dress may rival the winter's snow. . . your hands may bear no stain on them, yet they are not clean. . . It is not what lies without, but within, that defiles a man.” (Thomas Guthrie from *The Gospel in Ezekiel*).

⁴² And we see here not just the *presence* of evil but *complete absence* of any good (cf. Romans 3:10-18).

⁴³ Nor is it any different today: “having eyes full of adultery that *never cease* from sin. . .” (2Pet.2:14).

⁴⁴ *No power to change*: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil” (Jer.13:23; cf. Ezek.19:11; Jer.23:29; Jn.8:34-36). *No desire to change*: “the Light has come into the world, and men *loved* the darkness rather than the Light,” (John 3:19; cf. Jn.8:44).

⁴⁵ *Every kind of people*: See Genesis 6:19; 7:16; 8:17; 9:16. *Every single individual*: See Genesis 6:17; Leviticus 17:14; Numbers 18:15; Deuteronomy 5:26; Job 34:15; Isaiah 40:6.

⁴⁶ We know this because when “all flesh” perished in the flood (Gen.7:21), it included both all peoples *and* every individual.

⁴⁷ Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology*.

⁴⁸ See also Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; James 1:17.

So now we know what this verse *isn't* saying: it's *not* saying God changed or made a mistake. Well, what *IS* this verse saying? What do we learn from this verse? We learn that God is not impersonal or unmoved. What is the Lord's response to man's wickedness? He's "grieved in His heart." What an incredibly affectionate phrase!! The Lord's response *isn't apathy*—He's not stoic or unmoved. It's not even *anger*—or even *disgust*. It's grief. He's *grieved in His heart*. God is deeply affected. This isn't the reaction of an impersonal God who doesn't care about His creatures, who is eager to punish sin. This is the reaction of the most loving, tender father, whose beloved child has broken his heart.

B) He is JUST: "Verse 5 is the *divine assessment*: God saw the wickedness of man; verse 6 is the *divine reaction*: He repented that he had made man; verse 7 is the *divine resolve*: 'I will destroy man!'"⁴⁹ God's justice and righteousness demand that judgment be brought to the world. God is loving, yes. But He is also just; He *loves* justice (Isaiah 61:8); and the Scriptures declare that He cannot and will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3).⁵⁰ God's justice is a good thing. We don't have to shrink back from this as Christians. A *good* judge punishes the guilty—that's what he *ought* to do. So then, how much more should the Judge of all the earth do what is right?

When Scripture describes the wickedness that has filled the earth in the days of Noah, it says that "the earth was corrupt *in the sight of God*." This is important, because it reminds us that *God is the author of justice*; He is the one who defines and declares what is righteous and what is wicked. When Jesus chose the story of Noah as His sermon text, He described what people were doing in those days as "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Luke 17:26-27). This sounds pretty normal. If human nature is the same then as it was now, I would think most of them thought of themselves as normal people; good people—not perfect, but not so bad. *In their own eyes*, they weren't so bad; but they were corrupt *in the sight of God*, and that's the only judgment that mattered.

We also learn here about the *extent* of God's justice. God didn't judge the world on a sliding scale because *everyone* was so wicked. God didn't look down on the earth and say, "Well, everyone is corrupt; but to destroy the whole world would be a bit extreme." God didn't separate those who had committed the most atrocious sins from those who had just committed "regular" sins. God didn't put to one side all the people that had never committed murder, for instance, and let them live, because at least they had never killed anyone. There was no sliding scale; there was no grading on a curve. There was only one standard; sin was sin. And everyone was guilty. So His wrath fell upon them all.

And God is *still* just; His character doesn't change. He wasn't just holy and righteous *in the Old Testament*. In fact, it's the knowledge of God's justice that leads us to salvation. How so? Well, Scripture tells us that the reason Noah and his family entered the ark was, "because of the water of the flood" (7:7). In other words, they entered the ark because the flood was going to come. The whole point of the ark was deliverance from God's impending wrath. Wrath was coming upon the world, but deliverance would be found in the ark; with that knowledge, they entered the ark. The idea of getting in the ark would have made no sense at all apart from the reality of an imminent catastrophic flood. And it's the same way for us. The message of God's free grace and forgiveness through Jesus makes no sense without an understanding of the context of God's wrath that is reserved in heaven to be poured out in full measure for all eternity upon all those who are outside the ark of salvation, Jesus Christ. Wrath is coming upon the world—but *there is safety in Jesus*.

C) He is FAITHFUL: It's a sober thing to ponder how God was *faithful to send the flood*, just as He said He would. God told Noah He was going to destroy the earth, and Noah, who was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), must have been declaring that message to his neighbors; and then one day, *it happened*. We learn something really important here: *God is faithful to uphold His promises of judgment*. Don't ever think that God has given us all the warnings in His Word for no reason; that maybe there won't be a final judgment after-all; maybe the lake of fire is just an empty threat; maybe God will just forgive everybody in the end. God is faithful to keep His Word, not just in salvation, but in judgment; this is the whole point of 2 Peter 3:5-7: "Know this first of all, that in the last days

⁴⁹ From Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*.

⁵⁰ Which, by the way, has massive implications for what happened on the cross—because God didn't just sweep our sins under the rug and try to pretend they weren't there—He actually punished them in full—but upon His Son instead of on you and me.

mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation. For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. *But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*"

After the flood, the Lord shows His faithfulness in another way. He made a covenant with Noah that He would never again send a flood to destroy the earth, and that as long as the earth remains, "Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (8:22). Here we see the Lord's faithfulness to uphold the promises He has made to a faithless and sinful (and vastly unconverted) human race. The Scripture quoted above from 2 Peter has some irony in it—here are people mocking God's promise of a coming judgment *because* "all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4); and *the whole reason it does* is because of God's promise to sustain a sinful people who mock Him for sending the rain again so harvest can come. So we see that the reason God keeps up the fixed seasons of the earth, and the reason He has never sent another flood to destroy all mankind, is because of His faithfulness to keep His promise.

Perhaps the clearest way we see God's faithfulness is His saving of Noah *through the flood*. Think about what would have happened if God had not spared Noah either and wiped out the entire world? And later—if He wanted—made a fresh start with humanity by forming another man from the ground to repopulate the earth? Well, for one thing, we wouldn't be here. But far more importantly, the Messiah—whom God had promised back in Genesis 3:15 to send—and not only promised to send but promised would come *through Eve*—that promised Messiah would never have come—at least not as a descendant of Eve. And that means that God would have broken the promise He had made back in Genesis 3:15. *God preserved Noah through the flood in order to uphold the solemn covenant promise He had bound himself to fulfill.* God saved Noah because His own name was at stake in upholding the truth of His Word to His people. God preserved Noah to show the world that He never, ever, breaks the covenant promises He makes to His people. *And, by the way, this is exactly how He continues to deal with us in Christ* (Exodus 32:11-14; Ezekiel 20:5-22; Romans 15:8).⁵¹

3. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God saves sinners*

A) *Salvation is by GRACE alone:*

Most of us tend to misunderstand the meaning of Genesis 6:8-9. We read that Noah was "a righteous man," (v9), and so we draw the conclusion that it must have been for that reason that he "found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (v8). We tend to think that Noah found favor with God *because* he was a righteous man. But is that why Noah found favor with God? Is that why *anyone* finds favor with God? No way.⁵² Noah wasn't saved from the flood because of his righteousness—but *by God's grace*. Noah was a sinner saved by grace just like you and me.⁵³

How do we know that? Look with me how carefully Scripture preserves what it says in Genesis 6:8-9. The first thing we notice is the order of verses 8-9. Scripture records that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord (in verse 8) *before* it records that Noah was a righteous man (in verse 9).⁵⁴ Noah found favor with God *before* he was a righteous man. And we don't just see it in the

⁵¹ We can bank on God's promises. One illustration here: Even when it doesn't *seem* to be the case, *the moon is round*.

⁵² "If you look up this expression 'X found grace,' you will discover it in situations like David and Mephibosheth, or in Genesis 19 in the case of Lot being rescued from Sodom. Every time this expression occurs, it focusses attention as far as the receiving end is concerned on a meritless situation. If a person testifies 'I have found grace,' he is saying, 'There is nothing about me that could have earned or prompted this.' When, therefore, we read in Genesis 6.8 [that] 'Noah found grace', the scriptural understanding of that phrase is that 'grace found Noah'." (Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*).

⁵³ "But pure and unmixed grace. . . is made the total and only cause of that matter [that Noah walked with God]. . . He was first found the object of God's grace and favor, and not grace first found in him; thereby plainly to insinuate, that for no righteousness in him it was that God did first absolutely pitch his grace upon him, abstractly from the consideration of his holiness, and that was the fruit of that grace of God's" (Thomas Goodwin, *Works, Volume 9*).

⁵⁴ "Notice how carefully Genesis safeguards this truth. . . We are not permitted by Genesis to reverse the order of verses 8 and 9. . . What we must say when we come to verse 9 is not 'Now we see *why* Noah was chosen,' but 'Now we see *that* Noah was

chronological order of verses 8-9, but in the structure of the passage. Scripture emphatically puts a great chasm of separation between verses 8 and 9. Look at how verse 9 begins: “These are the records of the generations of Noah.” This is the phrase that the author of Genesis uses for chapter divisions—to start a new chapter (Compare 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:27; 25:19). Genesis 6:8 is the end of the “chapter of Adam,” and Genesis 6:9 is the beginning of a completely new chapter.

Scripture is telling us that Noah didn't find favor with God *because* he was a righteous man—*God's favor* found Noah *long before* he was a righteous man. The only reason Noah was a righteous man *in verse 9* was that *God had first drawn Noah by His grace in verse 8.*⁵⁵ So often people read Genesis 6 and think that Noah wasn't a sinner—or at least not that bad of a sinner—and that's why God saved him. But the truth is, Noah was just as sinful as everyone else. “Noah was with the rest of the world under the wrath of God.”⁵⁶ But instead of getting wrath, Noah got grace. And then that same grace that *saved* him began also to *sanctify* him—*that's why* he was a righteous man—after saving him God began to change him, just as He does with us. Noah wasn't saved because he was a righteous man. Noah was a righteous man because he had been saved.

B) Salvation is through FAITH alone:

This is made clear in the account in Hebrews 11:7, “*By faith* Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*”

What does this verse tell us? Something quite significant: “[These] last words, 'he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith,' . . . [show] us that *Noah had . . . the very same righteousness for the object of his faith, which our gospel now proposes to us,* and which our faith does lay hold upon. . . Now it was *that* righteousness Noah had an eye upon. . . And in sign and token that yet *he had his eye upon this righteousness out of himself to save him,* it was through the same faith he betook himself to that ark, a means wholly out of himself, to save him from the waters, which otherwise all his own righteousness would never have done. . . [thus] *the righteousness he believed on, and was made heir of, was this gospel righteousness, signified to him by the ark.* . . .”⁵⁷

Noah was saved by *grace* alone—and he was saved *through* faith alone—and that faith was not just a faith in God *in general*—but *faith in the coming Savior* who had been promised in Genesis 3:15.

C) Salvation is in CHRIST alone:

We are pointed to Christ in a number of ways in the account of Noah. . .

I) Noah's NAME: Noah's name means, “rest,” and we are told that Noah's father, Lamech, named his son Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed” (5:29). In one sense, the words were fulfilled in Noah—the old earth, which the Lord had cursed, would be flooded over with water—*recreated*, as it were. But though the Lord promised after the flood to never again curse the earth (8:21), presumably by flooding it against with water, the original curse was still there. We still live in a fallen world. Lamech's prophecy about his son looked *backward* to the promise the Lord had given in Genesis 3:15, and *forward* to Christ, the true fulfillment of that promise, who would

chosen.” (Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*).

⁵⁵ Again, as Alec Motyer had so beautifully styled it (see above): “What we must say when we come to verse 9 is not: ‘Now we see *why* Noah was chosen’ — But: ‘Now we see *that* Noah was chosen.’” (*Covenant and Promise*).

⁵⁶ Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*.

⁵⁷ Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p44 (emphasis mine). This is especially evident when comparing this phrase at the end of this verse with the same phrase as found in Romans 4:13 and 9:30. Francis Roberts echoes Goodwin: “This righteousness by faith is that perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which God of His mere grace imputes to them that by faith accept and receive the same, having renounced all self-righteousness, and all other ways of sinners' justification whatsoever. . . Hence therefore it is evident, that Noah, in all this federal transaction betwixt God and him, had a special eye to Christ by faith, and that beyond the temporal salvation of his house in the ark by waters from the general deluge, he beheld and apprehended the spiritual salvation of Christ's house the Church, and peculiarly of himself from the wrath of God by Jesus Christ and his blood; otherwise how could this act of his faith have made him heir of Christ's righteousness?” (Roberts, pp264-65).

come forth as a seed of Noah, and bring rest and re-creation to redeemed humanity in the fullest sense.⁵⁸ So, Lamech's words find *partial* fulfillment in Noah, but *full* fulfillment in Christ.⁵⁹

II) Noah's ARK: Noah's ark is a type of Jesus our Savior.⁶⁰ When God's wrath fell upon all mankind, it was only those who were in the ark that were saved from judgment. Further, the ark not only protected all those inside, but did so in particular by absorbing the full force of the wrath of God brought upon it in the flood, just as Jesus on the cross saved His people by absorbing God's wrath in their place.⁶¹ Noah wasn't saved from the flood of God's wrath because he didn't sin or even because his sin wasn't so bad; he was saved because he was inside the ark when the waters came.⁶² And just as there was only one ark in the days of Noah, and only one door on that ark; so too the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is not just one way of salvation, but *the only way*. If men are to be saved from the judgment to come, they must be saved in Christ *alone*.

III) Noah's HEADSHIP: Noah himself is a type of Christ, the second Adam, who functions as the covenant head for his whole family.⁶³ Even though the covenant God makes with Noah in Genesis 6 is exclusively with Noah (Genesis 6:18), *Noah's entire family*—his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives—along with the animals—are saved from the flood *through Noah*. We see this in Genesis 6:18-19: The Lord said to Noah, “But I will establish My covenant *with you*; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives *with you*. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive *with you*. . .” In the Hebrew text, it's clear that the covenant is with Noah alone (all the pronouns here are *singular*); but Noah's whole family is saved in and through and by their relation to him. Later, we read in Genesis 7:1: “Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Enter the ark, *you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me* in this time.'” Again, the pronouns here are in the singular tense. Noah alone was seen as righteous, but Noah's entire family (or household) was saved *on account of Noah*. We continue to see the same pattern throughout chapters 7-8. We read in Genesis 7:23: “only Noah was left, *together with those that were with him in the ark*.” Genesis 8:1 tells us: “But God remembered *Noah* and all the beasts and all the cattle *that were with him* in the ark.” And in Genesis 8:16-18, it's emphasized over and over again that everything in the ark was only there on account of their relation to Noah: They were in the ark *with him*.⁶⁴

This points us back to the truths we learned in Romans 5:12-21. Scripture is portraying Noah as the covenant head of his people. It is *his* righteousness that serves as the basis for including *the*

⁵⁸ See Matthew 11:28 and Galatians 3:13. This is similar to the Davidic covenant, where the Lord made promises to David about his descendant after him, who would build Him a house; in one sense these are fulfilled in Solomon; but in a fuller sense, they are clearly pointing to a more distant descendant of David, Jesus the Messiah, who would fulfill the promises in the truest sense. See also Haggai 2:23 for a similar occurrence, as Christ would come forth from Zerubbabel.

⁵⁹ “[Noah was] the beginner and founder of a new world; and, in that respect, a type of the second Adam, yea, and the father of him, namely, Christ according to the flesh.” (Thomas Goodwin, *Works Volume 9*).

⁶⁰ Explicit from 1 Peter 3:18-22: “The ark, that was the refuge and hiding-place of the church in this time of storm and flood, was a type of Christ, the true hiding-place of the church from the storms and floods of God's wrath” (Jonathan Edwards).

⁶¹ “[Noah and his family] would be preserved *through* this judgment, and not *from* it, by being brought into the bosom of the ark, where he would be safe. This deliverance, then, was not by being taken entirely out of God's judgment, but by being preserved through it, because of that which he was in: God did not save Noah and his family by simply overlooking them, or forbearing to pour out his wrath upon them alone in all the world; but rather, when he poured out all his wrath upon them, as he did upon the rest of the world, because they were in the ark, the ark itself bore the brunt of the wrath. . . just as we today are delivered from God's wrath, not by being plucked up from it entirely, but by being taken through it and yet preserved, because we are in Christ, who bore the entire brunt of God's wrath.” (Nathan Pitchford, *Images of Christ*).

⁶² See 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 3:3-10; Hebrews 11:7 in light of 12:2. I absolutely love how Goodwin puts it: “All Noah's holiness would not have saved him from the waters, but his being in the ark saved him from the waters. . .” (*Works*, V9, p72).

⁶³ As Roberts explains it: “Noah was a singular type of Christ. . . and the temporal saving of his house with himself in the ark by water, a special type of the salvation of Christ's elect in the Church by Jesus Christ. Consequently God's Covenant with Noah touching the saving of him and his family in the ark by water. . . intended herein to signify the elect's salvation by Christ through faith. . . Noah built a material ark, for the saving of his natural posterity therein from the general deluge of waters, according to God's Covenant. So Jesus Christ builds a spiritual ark. . . for the saving of all his elect, his supernatural posterity therein, from the deluge of God's wrath. . . They that were saved in the ark were saved therein with Noah, who forsook his own habitation to dwell with them in the ark and with them to be tossed up and down with winds and waves that they might be saved with him. . . So they that are saved in the ark of the Church, are saved by Christ's gracious and powerful presence. . . Thus Christ endangers himself with us, for our safety. While Christ is in the ship, in the ark, all is safe” (pp265-66, 271-72).

⁶⁴ As Alec Motyer puts it: “When Noah is to gather his family and the animals into the ark, it is specified more than once,

rest of his family. In this respect, Noah typifies Christ, the second Adam, and founder of a new humanity. In the flood, God poured out His wrath upon the world, but all those who belonged to Noah were spared *on account of Noah.* So too, on the coming day of wrath, all those who belong to Christ will be spared *on account of Christ:* “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). So if you belong to Jesus, you can rest knowing that your salvation doesn't depend upon you. Just as Noah's family was saved on account of *Noah's* righteousness and not their own (7:1), you are saved on account of *Christ's* righteousness and not your own (Romans 5:12-21): “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 15:56-57).

IV) Noah's OFFERING: We are also pointed to Christ in the sacrifice made by Noah after the waters of the flood had subsided. Noah took of every clean bird and every clean animal and offered them up as a burnt offering on the alter he had built.⁶⁵ “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man. . .” (Genesis 8:21).⁶⁶ This imagery of *a soothing aroma* is echoed in Ephesians 5:1-2: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, *just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*” The sweet-smelling offering here in Noah's sacrifice is a fore-picturing of the offering up of Christ on our behalf.⁶⁷

V) Noah's PROPHECY: A prophecy of the coming of Christ is hinted at—not only at the *beginning* of the story of Noah, but at the *end* of the story. Noah's father had made a prophecy about his son in Genesis 5:29; later *Noah* would make a prophecy about *his sons* in Genesis 9:26-27. After cursing his grandson Canaan (because of what Ham, his father, had done), Noah goes on to bless his son Shem: “*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.*” Noah put the blessing upon his son Shem. And it would be through Shem that the seed of the Messiah, who had been promised back in Genesis 3:15, would come. It would be through Shem that *Abraham* would later come (11:10-32), and through Abraham would one day come *Christ.*

4. The SUBSTANCE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of what we have been given in Christ*

We can also see in the covenant with Noah some of the things that God has freely bestowed on us in the gospel. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know *the things freely given to us by God.*” God has freely given us so many things in the gospel—in the Covenant of Grace—and we get a glimpse of what some of these things are in God's covenant with Noah. There are two things in particular we could mention:

A) *PEACE with God:* We saw how God saved Noah and his household from the wrath of the flood in Genesis 6. After the flood, God confirms His covenant with Noah and his sons in Genesis 9. And God gives His word that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. Now, again, in a very real sense, this was a *temporal* promise given not just to Noah and his sons—but all humanity—as the earth would be repopulated through Noah's sons. And it wasn't even just to all humanity, but even to all the animals with Noah on the ark (9:10,12). But the question is—is this the *only* thing that Scripture means to teach us through this passage? I believe that there is more that the Lord wants to teach us here than just the fact that He made a temporal promise to all creation to never again flood the earth. I believe that *there are truths here that God wants us to see about the gospel and the Covenant of Grace—not just temporal promises to all humanity—but eternal promises to His people:*

they are in the ark *with you.* They are not there in their own right, but only in a derived right.” (*Covenant and Promise*).

⁶⁵ That Noah took of every clean bird and every clean animal for his burnt offering is a detail we pass over quickly without giving much thought to. But doubtless, this must have been the most extensive burnt offering in the history of the world.

⁶⁶ “The Hebrew term for 'pleasing,' *nikhoakh*, conveys the idea of rest and tranquility. It is related to the name 'Noah' (Hb. *Noakh*) and is probably used here in order to remind the reader of Lamech's remarks in Gen.5:29.” (*ESV Study Bible*).

⁶⁷ “Here it is the godward [aspect] that is brought before us. Blessed indeed is it to learn what the sacrifice of Christ obtained for His people—deliverance from the wrath to come, securing an inheritance in Heaven forever; but far more blessed is it to know what that sacrifice meant unto Him to whom it was offered. In the sacrifice of Christ, God Himself found that which was “a sweet savor,” with which He was well pleased” (A.W. Pink, *Divine Covenants*).

Let's turn to Isaiah and read again together what Scripture tells us in Isaiah 54:9-10: “*For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken, says the Lord who has compassion on you.*”⁶⁸

Now remember where Isaiah 54 is. It comes right after Isaiah 53, which is the clearest prophecy in the Old Testament about who the Savior is and how He would accomplish redemption for His people. And it's in that context that we read in Isaiah 54 of the promises that God is making to those for whom the Savior would shed His blood. *Isaiah 53* is about *how* the Messiah would accomplish redemption; *Isaiah 54* is about *what that means* for all those who belong to the Messiah.

And in order to illustrate what the Messiah's atoning death would mean for God's people, the Lord points back to His covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. And, in effect, He is saying: “Look—if you want to understand how incredibly wonderful and secure your standing is in the Covenant of Grace—then go back and study the covenant I made with Noah.⁶⁹ Just as I made a solemn promise *to Noah* and his sons to never again flood the earth—so it is with My promise *to you* in the Covenant of Grace: The wrath I poured out on others, I shall never pour out on you. You have entered into My peace.”

Notice also that the promise that God made to Noah was completely *unconditional*. God didn't say: “Noah, I've saved you from the flood. Now, *if* you obey Me fully and live like a good Christian and always keep My commandments and never stray away from Me, *then* I won't send another flood.” No, that's not what God said. The promise was totally unconditional; it was in no way conditional on Noah and what he did or didn't do. Don't you think that Noah might have gotten a little nervous, when after the flood, the clouds began to darken once again and it was obvious a big storm was on its way? “*Uh oh.*” He might have gotten nervous at times—but the wonderful thing is, *he didn't have to.*

Why? Because God keeps His promises. And as it was with Noah, so it is with us. Here in Isaiah 54, God refers to the covenant He's made with His people as “My covenant of peace” (v10). In Christ, we have come out from under God's wrath, and have entered into His peace: “having been justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). We may at times still give in to doubts and fears, just like Noah may have. But, just like Noah, *we don't have to.*

B) The BLESSING of God: And if this was *all* that God gave us—it would still be unbelievable. But God has given us so much more. Salvation is so much more than just—we don't have to go to hell anymore. In the Covenant of Grace, God hasn't just taken away His wrath—He's lavished upon us *His blessing*. Let's turn back to Genesis 9 and read together Genesis 9:1: “*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'*” This might sound familiar, and the reason it does is that this is exactly what God had said to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. God is repeating here to Noah the same thing He had said to Adam back in the garden. *But the reason this is so amazing is that when God blessed Adam in Genesis 1:28, that was before Adam had sinned.* God's blessing was upon Adam—but that was before Adam fell into sin. And we don't read anything about God's blessing for over 1600 years *because Adam's fall lost that blessing*—and all mankind with him. But now, here once again, in light of the sweet aroma of the burnt offerings at the end of chapter 8, God smells the sweet fragrance, “*And God blessed Noah.*” What we see here

⁶⁸ Goodwin says: “That these words speak, in the first place, [to] the pure covenant of grace, and the everlastingness and perpetuity of that grace and covenant, as it flows in God's heart in and from election, may be apparent in the very reading the words. . .” (*Works*, V9, p42). And Pink also: “How plainly this shows that the covenant with Noah not only afforded a practical demonstration of the unfailing faithfulness of God in fulfilling its temporal promise to the world, but also that the church was the chief object and subject concerned in it. Why did the Lord promise to preserve the earth until the end time, so that it should not again be destroyed by a flood? The answer is, because of the church” (A.W. Pink, *Divine Covenants*).

⁶⁹ This is how Goodwin also understood it: “[It is] As if he should say, ‘This is that very thing which I intended to prefigure and fore-signify, then when I sat at the flood (as Psalm 29:11) in and by those passages with Noah, which were at and about his flood, which God calls the waters of Noah. *This, even this*, which I even now have spoken of, my grace and mercy to my church, who are his sons and posterity, in the words immediately before; even this was the mind and mystery of those my promises, which I made then to him upon occasion of and about those waters. . .’” (Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p57).

is that *the blessing that we had in the garden at creation—that Adam lost—is brought back to us in the Covenant of Grace*. Isn't that amazing? *All that humanity possessed in Eden—but had lost through the fall—is fully restored once again in and through Jesus Christ—in the Covenant of Grace.*⁷⁰

5. The BASIS of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God lavishes His grace on sinners*

Sin brings a curse—so why is it that we find God blessing Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1? Well, we alluded to it above. The answer is found at the end of Genesis 8. Chapter divisions are good, but we have to remember that they are not part of the original text. Sometimes chapters are put in the right place, and sometimes they're not. And here, in my opinion, Genesis chapter 9 is in the wrong place, because Genesis 8:20 begins a thought that doesn't end until 9:19. *Genesis 8:20-9:19 is one unified section of Scripture*. And the reason this is important is that *there is an intimate connection between Noah's offering (in 8:20-22) and God's covenant with Noah and his sons (in 9:1-17)*. *Noah's burnt offering is inseparably bound together with God's covenant with Noah and his sons*.

How are they bound together? God's covenant blessings and promises (in chapter 9) *are established upon* Noah's sacrifice of atonement (in chapter 8). The sweet-smelling sacrifice on the altar *was the basis of* God's covenant blessings and promises to Noah and his sons.⁷¹ Why does this matter? Because it points us to the reality that Jesus' finished work is the only basis of the covenant blessings that God continues to pour out upon sinners like us. *Jesus' blood purchased every blessing and promise in the Covenant of Grace for all God's people*. As one put it: “[the] blessing of Noah and his sons after the offering upon the altar. . . [was founded] upon a new basis. Adam and Eve received blessing on the ground of their creature purity; *Noah and his sons* (as the representatives of the entire election of grace) *received blessing on the ground of their acceptance and perfection in Christ.*”⁷²

This becomes even more clear when we read again what the Lord said after Noah offered up the burnt offerings on the altar: Genesis 8:21 says, “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, *for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth*. . . .” Now, look carefully at the reason the Lord is giving here for promising to never again destroy the earth with a flood: “for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.”⁷³ In other words, *human nature hadn't changed*. *God would bless Noah and his sons—not because they weren't sinners anymore—but completely despite* the ongoing presence of sin in their hearts and lives.

Now, *how* could God do this? Before the flood, man's wickedness was the reason He had destroyed the earth in the first place. Why is it different now? Why is it that God destroyed the earth because

⁷⁰ And more. . . is this hinted at in Genesis 9:3? This may be a bit of a stretch, but I think a good example here might be Rapunzel's song in Disney's *Tangled*: “Flower, gleam and glow; let your power shine. Make the clock reverse; bring back what once was mine. Heal what has been hurt; change the fate's design. Save what has been lost; bring back what once was mine.” Adam had God's blessing—but lost it. Jesus came to make the clock reverse; to bring back what once had been ours.

⁷¹ *Thomas Goodwin*: “The Lord smelled a sweet savor, 'a savor of rest, as in the Hebrew, that is, of peace; 'and said in his heart,' etc, 'he would curse the earth no more,' and thereupon established that covenant that follows. And that Noah, the father of that new world to come, was herein a type of Christ, and that this sacrifice of his was the type of Christ's sacrifice, we all acknowledge from the warrant of that allusion, and sameness of language the apostle uses of Christ's sacrifice. . . For look, as in the latter part of that 8th chapter he relates the story of Noah's sacrifice, that then in the 9th chapter he records that covenant thereupon;” (*Works*, V9, p74). *Jonathan Edwards*: “The sacrifice of Christ was represented by Noah's building an altar to the Lord, and offering a sacrifice of every clean beast, and every clean fowl. And we have an account of God accepting this sacrifice: and thereupon he blessed Noah, and established his covenant with him, and with his seed, promising to destroy the earth in like manner no more; signifying that it is by the sacrifice of Christ, God's favor is obtained, and his people are in safety from destroying judgments, and obtain the blessing of the Lord.” *Francis Roberts*: “God took occasion to make this Covenant, upon Noah's sacrificing of burnt-offerings upon an altar to Him, whereupon God smelled a sweet savor of rest, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more, etc. God made this Covenant, being pacified with Noah's burnt-offerings. How could Noah's burnt-offerings pacify God, or afford any sweet savor to God? Not in, and of themselves; for the bodies of beasts burnt, of themselves send forth an offensive savor. Not from any merit of Noah; for though he was righteous, yet his righteousness was of faith, not of works; and he was subject to sinful frailties. How then? Only as types of Christ's death for our sins, that sacrifice of sacrifices which was the substance, end and scope of all the sacrifices under the Old Testament. This was the sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. This was the true cause of appeasing God's wrath, of removing the curse, and of God's gracious covenanting with Noah no more to drown the world with a flood.” (Roberts, p273).

⁷² And it's the same for us. Quote from A.W. Pink, *Divine Covenants* (emphasis mine).

⁷³ “Genesis 6:5 described human nature and conduct as it was prior to the flood; this verse shows what man still was after it.” (A.W. Pink, *Total Depravity*).

of man's sin *then*, but He won't destroy it anymore *now*? Is God just changing His mind? Is God changing His character? Is God saying that from now on He's going to be a loving God instead of a righteous and holy and just God? No. Just as *man's condition* hasn't changed, *God's character* hasn't changed either—God's character doesn't change. What has changed is God's disposition. Not His disposition towards *sin*—but His disposition towards *sinners*. And the reason God's disposition towards sinners has changed is because of the sweet smelling offering on the altar: “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself. . .” Man hadn't gotten any better. And God hadn't decided to stop being righteous. But the sweet fragrance of Noah's burnt offerings had propitiated His wrath. Not even the flood had pacified God's anger against sin (He doesn't say this after 8:19)!! But God's wrath was fully and completely satisfied through the blood of atonement.⁷⁴

A) Christ's blood is the basis of our PEACE with God: We talked about the things freely given to us by God—and how one of those things is *peace with God*. Now, we have to realize first of all that this is something different than *the peace of God*. *The peace of God* is subjective; it comes and goes based on our feelings or experiences. But *peace with God* is rock-solid. And why do those who belong to Jesus have peace with God? Is it because we don't deserve God's wrath as much anymore because our sin isn't as bad as it used to be? No. It's because, as Scripture says, through Christ God has reconciled all things to Himself, “*having made peace through the blood of His cross.*”⁷⁵ Think back again to those verses in Isaiah. Why will God not pour out His anger on His people in *Isaiah 54*? Because He already poured all of it out on His Son in *Isaiah 53*.⁷⁶ And the cross *continues* to be the only basis of our peace with God through all the ups and downs of our Christian life. It was the cross alone that *first brought* us peace; and it's the cross alone that *ever maintains* that peace.

B) Christ's blood is the basis of the BLESSING of God: We talked about *God's blessing* as being one of the things freely given to us by God. And just as it is with God's peace—so it is with God's blessing: *the cross is the only basis and source of God's blessing*. Jesus' blood purchased God's blessing for all those who belong to Him: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *having become a curse for us. . . in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. . .*” (Galatians 3:13-14). Now, what this means is that if you belong to Jesus, God's blessing doesn't come and go depending on how spiritual of a day you're having or how good of a Christian you're being. Do you realize that? Why? Because God's blessing isn't based on you at all. *Adam's* blessing in the *Covenant of Works* was contingent on his obedience. But *in the Covenant of Grace*,

⁷⁴ As one said: “God's Covenant with Noah and his family, not to *curse the ground any more for mans sake*, by destroying the earth with a general flood of waters, *notwithstanding the imagination of mans heart remained evil from his youth*, doth notably point out God's Covenant of faith in Christ, by whom alone the curse due for sin is removed, though sin in his people be not wholly extinguished and obliterated. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, 'cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.'* . . . God's covenanting to curse the ground no more with a general flood forever, though mans heart remained corrupt, the more clearly signifies to us God's Covenant of Faith in Christ, touching sinners' recovery and salvation, because God took occasion to make this covenant, upon *Noah's sacrificing of burnt-offerings upon an altar to him, whereupon God smelled a sweet savor of rest, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more, etc.* God made this covenant, being pacified with Noah's burnt-offerings. How could Noah's burnt offerings pacify God, or afford any sweet savor to God? *Not* in, and of themselves; for the bodies of beasts burnt, of themselves send forth an offensive savor. *Not* from any merit of Noah; for though he was righteous, yet his righteousness was of faith, not of works; and he was subject to sinful frailties. How then? Only as types of Christ's death for our sins, that Sacrifice of sacrifices which was the substance, end and scope of all the sacrifices under the Old Testament. This was *the sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor*. This was the true cause of appeasing God's wrath, of removing the curse, and of God's gracious covenanting with Noah no more to drown the world with a flood.” (Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants with Man*, p273).

⁷⁵ Colossians 1:20. “And this covenant God styles here in Isaiah the covenant of his peace, [chapter 54] verse 10; for as that covenant in Genesis chapters 8-9 was upon Noah's offering that sacrifice and peace offering in it, 8:20, with which God professed himself so well pleased as it is said, he smelled a sweet savor, verse 21, so signifying himself at peace, and atoned with Noah and his sons, and propitious unto the new world they were to be the restorers of (for that was the season God took to express this covenant in).” (Thomas Goodwin, *Works V9*, p52).

⁷⁶ As Goodwin says: “And when God's covenant is in this 10th verse [of Isaiah 54] styled 'the covenant of his peace,' it imports as much as, not of grace simply, but of peace; as of God being pacified by an atonement of a mediator. And the aspect this word peace may seem to have here unto what in the chapter before had foregone, where the sacrifice of Christ being prophesied of, it is said, 'He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him;' through which, God being pacified towards us, makes a covenant of peace with us. . . For look, as in the latter part of that 8th chapter he relates the story of Noah's sacrifice, that then in the 9th chapter he records that covenant thereupon, just answerably in Isaiah, after he had in the foregoing 53rd chapter foretold Christ's great sacrifice of himself: 'Bearing our sins and sorrows, making his soul an offering for sin,' with promise that 'many should be justified thereof; and he should see his seed,' etc.” (*Works, V9*, p74).

*the full presence of God's blessing in your life isn't based on what you do—it's based solely on what Jesus did. Through His blood, Jesus purchased for all who belong to Him the full blessing of God.*⁷⁷

God's peace and blessing and everything else He's promised to you are based solely on the finished work of Christ. As with Noah's offering, God has smelled the soothing aroma of the blood of Jesus, and He is well pleased, and now speaks to you nothing but words of blessing and peace. *As Noah's offering was the basis of God's covenant blessings and promises to Noah and his sons, Jesus' blood is the basis—and the only basis—of God's covenant blessings and promises to us in Christ.*

6. The STABILITY of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the security we have in Christ*

The covenant that God makes with Noah and his sons in Genesis 9 is called an “everlasting covenant.” We see this in two places. In verse 12, the Lord says that the covenant He is making would be, literally, “for everlasting generations.” Then in verse 16, the Lord refers to this covenant as the “everlasting covenant.” Now, we've already seen (in Isaiah 54:9-10) that this covenant God is making with Noah and his sons is about more than just not destroying the earth again with a flood—that it's meant to point us to truths about the Covenant of Grace—about the gospel, and the redemption Christ accomplished, and what that means for God's people. So, the fact that God calls this covenant an *everlasting* covenant is meant to teach us something about the Covenant of Grace. *It's here to point us to the security that we have in Christ.* And, if there was any doubt about that from *this* passage, it's made crystal clear in other parts of Scripture. When Jeremiah looked forward to the New Covenant, he referred to it as “an *everlasting* covenant” (32:40). In the same way, the Lord spoke through the prophet Ezekiel about the New Covenant in this way: “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an *everlasting* covenant with them” (37:26). So the New Covenant is spoken of as an everlasting covenant, just as the covenant here with Noah and his sons. And what that means is that *the everlasting-ness of God's covenant with Noah is meant to point us to the everlasting-ness of the Covenant of Grace that is promised in the New Covenant.*

We can see this in one other way in the context of God's covenant with Noah. At the end of Genesis 8, between Noah's offering in 8:20 and God's blessing of Noah and his sons in 9:1, we read in Genesis 8:21-22: “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. *While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*” Alright, now hold your place there and turn with me to Jeremiah 33. Now, Jeremiah 31-33 is a prophecy of the coming of the New Covenant—the reality that all the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament pointed to. And here in Jeremiah 33, this is what the Lord declares in order to illustrate the security and permanence of God's purposes of grace towards us in the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 33:20-26: ²⁰Thus says the Lord, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant. . . ²⁵Thus says the Lord, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, ²⁶then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant. . . ⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Another Scripture here is Romans 4:6-8, “*just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.'*” According to verse 6, then, God's full blessing rests upon the man who has been justified. That is, God's blessing is based on our justification—not on our sanctification. The man on whom God's blessing rests in its entirety still sins (vv7-8)—*but his blessing is none the less diminished on account of his sin!* What this means, dear friends, is that God's blessing is not based on our performance in the Christian life—it doesn't go up and down with our personal spiritual accomplishments. God's blessing isn't based on whether or not we sin—but on *whether or not our sins have been forgiven. The blessing of God resting upon us isn't contingent on the absence of sin, but on the presence of a Savior.* And for this reason the blessing of God rests *fully and forever* upon sinners who belong to Jesus.

⁷⁸ Goodwin: “[Jeremiah here] does insert, and (as it were) call in for witnesses to attest and confirm the said stability [of the new covenant]. . . which we find in the covenant made with Noah, which purpose they serve most aptly and suitably unto; for in making that covenant with Noah, God had uttered himself in these words of everlastingness, 'I will establish my covenant with thee,' so to certify and assure the like stability of this covenant of grace. . . As God produced the materials promised and specified in Noah's covenant, so he expressly utters them under the word covenant; yea, and calls that with day and night his covenant; *my covenant*, twice mentioned, verses 20 and 25, thereby manifestly calling us to look back to Noah's covenant, made for day and night; as in the making of which he had an eye to his like ratification and firm establishment of his covenant

What is the Lord doing? He is referring back to the covenant with Noah—and to Genesis 8:22 in particular. And He's saying—look—if *you* can do something to break the promise I made to Noah about preserving the fixed patterns of the earth, then—and *only then*—can you break My Covenant of Grace. If *you* can stop the sun and moon from coming up, then—and *only then*—can you nullify or mess up or revoke your standing in the Covenant of Grace. But until then, forget about it—there's nothing you can do to alter the covenant promises I've made to you. And that's not all. Notice that God is *not only* saying: If you can stop the sun and moon from coming up, you can break My Covenant of Grace (vv20-21)—*but He's saying if you can defy time and space so as to make it so that the sun and moon never came up to begin with* (vv25-26)—only then can you break My Covenant of Grace with you—but *not until then*. Your standing in the Covenant of Grace is *that* secure. It's impossible to change God's purposes of grace towards you. You couldn't do it if you tried. You just don't have that kind of power. God is telling us that there is absolutely nothing we can do to nullify or change or revoke the promises that He's made to us in the Covenant of Grace: “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, *but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken*” (Isaiah 54:10). God's promises are *forever*.

7. The SCOPE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn who salvation is for*

A) It is for COVENANT CHILDREN: God made the covenant not just with Noah, but with his entire family (6:18; 7:1; 9:9ff): “God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 'Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you. . .’” Earlier we noted how this has implications for seeing Noah as a type of Christ, our covenant representative. But we also gain an important insight here into how God works. The Lord is pleased to extend His covenant *not just to individuals, but to entire families*. We'll study this more in detail with Abraham, but even here in God's covenant with Noah, far before Genesis 17, we see that God's covenant extends to whole families—not only to believers, but also to their children. Now, this *doesn't* mean that covenant children (the children of believers) are automatically saved. Though all the children of believers are *in* the covenant—not all are necessarily *of* the covenant.⁷⁹ Children of believers will show themselves to be either *covenant-keepers* (by embracing Christ by faith) or *covenant-breakers* (by rejecting Him). We see this clearly in Genesis 9, where Noah curses Canaan, the son of Ham, because of what his son Ham had done to him. Though Ham was a covenant child, it seems that he never embraced the covenant from the heart by faith.⁸⁰ But what we see here is that *God's covenant*

of grace, and as hiddenly intended by him then, when he uttered this of Noah's. . . And although the settlement of both these ordinances began at the creation (as in Genesis 1), yet God having cursed the ground for man's sake upon Adam's fall. . . He now began with Noah upon a new covenant. . . even the intuition of Christ's sacrifice, typed forth in that of Noah's, [and] did anew say in His heart, and declared also to Noah, 'I will not again curse the earth for man's sake. But whilst the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.’” (*Works*, V9, pp54-55).

⁷⁹ This is true also of the church as a whole; outwardly all professing members belong to the visible church, but only true believers belong to the invisible church. So, there are two extremes to avoid: 1) the teaching that the children of believers are *not in* the covenant, on the one hand; and 2) the teaching that the children of believers are *all of* the covenant, on the other.

⁸⁰ This is another way we would respond to Kuyper's claim that the covenant of Genesis 9 is made to all humanity without exception. Earlier we mentioned the importance of reading Genesis 9 in the context of Genesis 6; we noted that *all humanity* was actually destroyed in the flood—it was only God's chosen people *out of* all humanity that were spared from the judgment of the flood, and it is this same people with whom God covenants in Genesis 9. Here we can also note that while God's covenant promises extend to the children of believers and their children's children, even to a thousand generations, this does not mean that they encompass every specific child. *It is here with Noah as it was later with Abraham*. God made promises to Abraham and to his seed; but that did not mean His covenant extended to each and every descendant of Abraham. In time we come to learn that God's promises to Abraham were not to all his seed without distinction, but to the elect children of promise from among his physical seed. As Paul wrote in Romans 9:6-7: “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: ‘Through Isaac your descendants will be named.’” The covenant line continues forever, but not all who come from Abraham's seed would be included in that covenant line. God would choose Isaac but not Ishmael, and Jacob but not Esau. So too, “God's covenant included Noah and Noah's family. The children of believers in their generations are included in the covenant. God's covenant with Noah also teaches the truth, the painful truth, but the truth that underscores God's sovereignty in the covenant, that not all the children of believers are included in God's covenant. There are Ham's and there are Canaan's.” (Cammenga, *Cosmic Grace*). Francis Roberts also draws out the same truths from Genesis 9, noting in particular: “God covenants not only with His people, but with their seed, and with their seed's seed, that keep Covenant with him, even to all generations. . . *Doubt*: Seeing God established his Covenant not only with Noah, but with his sons, and their seed also, God seems to admit into Covenant with

promises are made, not just to individuals, but to entire families, even for generations to come: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).⁸¹

So, *pray for your children*. Plead with God to fulfill His covenant promises to your children, and their children, and their children—to confirm His covenant promises to your descendants after you.⁸² Also, *invest in your children*. A lot of fathers in ministry make the mistake of forgetting about their children; they invest in everyone else, but they fail to take the time to really invest in the lives of their own children.⁸³ And *teach your children*. Teach them everything you know. Teach them about the gospel, but also teach them about the covenant promises. Tell them that they have been set apart, as born into a covenant family. But also tell them that it all means nothing if they don't embrace Christ from the heart. Plead with them to show themselves covenant-keepers, and not covenant-breakers.⁸⁴

B) It is for *INGRAFTED FOREIGNERS*: The covenant of grace isn't meant to be limited just to covenant children who grow up in the church.⁸⁵ We are also given hints in the Noahic covenant that the Lord means to draw a people to Himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven:

I) Apparent in Noah's **BLESSING**: After Noah blesses his son Shem, he goes on to say, "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (9:27). What does this mean? Well, we are told that from the offspring of Japheth, "the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations" (10:2,5). Later in Scripture, in the last chapter of Isaiah, we are given a precious glimpse of future missionary labors among unreached Gentile nations (a Gentile mission to Gentiles). If we compare Genesis 10:1-4 with Isaiah 66:19, it is apparent that it is the scattered sons of Japheth that will be brought home to the Messiah in the latter days. As another put it: the descendants of Japheth are "non-Shemites who become Shemites by embracing the God of Shem."⁸⁶ They're Gentile foreigners, strangers to God, outsiders—who come to take refuge in Christ.

himself the wicked as well as the righteous. For Ham was ungodly, and cursed by his own father; and more of the posterity of these three sons of Noah were wicked than godly. . . . *Resolution*: . . . In God's Covenant we must further distinguish betwixt the *Outward Administration* and common benefits thereof which come short of salvation; and the *Inward Efficacy* and special benefits thereof which reach unto salvation. In the former sense all the seed of Noah and of his sons were comprehended in this Covenant, and thereby secured against any other universal deluge of waters; but in the latter sense only the elect of their seed are comprised in this Covenant, as tending to secure them from eternal perdition in Christ." (Roberts, pp258-259).

⁸¹ Again, we'll study this more in depth with the Abrahamic covenant. Ligon Duncan says it this way: "As God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone in the original Covenant of Works, guess what, it is not good to be alone in the Covenant of Grace either. God continues to operate on a family principle. By the way, this is foundational for your understanding of the Church. The Church is not incidental to God's plan. God's plan does not save individuals and—oh by the way—we might do a church as well. The Church is fundamental, it is central to what God is doing in redemption and, of course, this cuts directly against the kind of intense individualism that continues to characterize the western world today." (*Covenant Theology* course).

⁸² There is one particular family that has had a great impact on me personally and on the world for the kingdom of God. One night I was having dinner with my friend, and when I started asking more about his family, he began telling me the story of his great-grandfather's conversion. What he said was that when his great-grandfather came to Christ, he made it a point of emphasis to pray for his children, and their children, and their children. The incredible outpouring of the Spirit on this particular family seems to be the result of one man claiming the covenant promises of God for his children and grandchildren.

⁸³ There's a wonderful phrase I've heard: "missional family." Most of us are prone to fall off on one side or the other; either we forget about our kids trying to reach the world, or we forget about the world trying to raise our kids. We need to do both.

⁸⁴ There's no greater or more powerful illustration that I know of on this point than the story Bill Iverson tells: "I took my grandsons up on the highest building in Miami, and as we looked over Biscayne Bay to the vast Atlantic, I told them a story. *A tropical storm came up and a boatload of school children and teachers capsized about one hundred yards offshore. A team of local football players was at the beach and saw the tragedy in the making. As the coach realized the danger, he galvanized the team into action, forming a human chain reaching out into the water. Soon children and adults were pulled along the chain to safety. But one greedy lad saw what looked like a mahogany jewelry box floating by. He reached for it, breaking the chain and drowning himself and several others.* How tragic! But there is even a greater tragedy: the broken covenant promise—not God's, but ours. I looked those youngsters in the eye with earnest tears, and encouraged them as a covenant grandfather: 'Do not break the chain!' How I plead for each child and grandchild daily by faith in the blood of the everlasting covenant. Take heart. We frail promise makers are not alone. The covenant God is the ultimate promise keeper." (cf. www.woh.org).

⁸⁵ Though, it is in many ways a comforting thought that every single nation and individual traces their roots ultimately to Noah. In that sense, every person we will meet, and every nation to which God may send us, originally came from a covenant family. Though they may be far from that reality now—all we are doing is calling people back to their true family roots.

⁸⁶ Palmer Robertson (?). Goodwin: "You, brethren, even you, are a portion of that seed, Japetians all; and whose forefathers have been persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem, and the gospel is amongst you to this day; you are, with other nations, the church in all these prophecies pointed at, and children of this covenant, which hath taken hold of many of you." (*V9*, p77).

II) Typified through Noah's ANIMALS: Earlier we talked briefly about the significance of the animals in the covenant of Genesis 9. We asked how it could be that animals are included in this covenant, if indeed it is part of the Covenant of Grace? There, we explained that all creation, in a sense, is comprehended in the Covenant of Grace. We noted that just as all creation suffered the consequences for man's sin in the fall, so too, the healing of redemption will one day extend, in turn, to all creation. So far, so good. But I believe there's even more significance to the animals.

Some noted theologians⁸⁷ believe that the animals which were gathered from every corner of the earth into Noah's ark were a picture of the reality that people from every tribe and tongue and nation will be gathered to Christ (cf. Revelation 5:9; 7:9).⁸⁸ In particular, these theologians affirm that the clean and unclean animals which were gathered into the ark fore-pictured two distinct groups: the *clean animals* represented the Jews, and the *unclean animals* represented the Gentiles. This may well be the case, especially in light of what we read elsewhere in Scripture:

Isaiah 43:20, “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people.”

Here, God's chosen people are pictured as unclean and wild animals; they are likened to jackals and ostriches. And we see the same thing echoed in another passage in the New Testament:

⁸⁷ Including Thomas Goodwin and Jonathan Edwards, who are quoted at length below.

⁸⁸ It might be helpful to quote a few others at length here: *Thomas Goodwin*: “I must now again retrieve that objection which I before have made, namely, that there were all sorts of beasts, and fowls, and creeping things in the ark, which were saved from the waters, in a corporeal salvation, as well as Noah and his sons; yea, and with whom, after Noah and they came forth of the ark, that second covenant was made. And the objection is, that therefore this covenant cannot be drawn into a figure of the gospel covenant with the church, his elect. . . We read, Acts 10:11-12, how in the first beginning of the gospel, or of this new Christian church (as Peter speaks of it, Acts 15), there was a vessel let down from heaven in a vision to Peter, wherein were 'all manner of four-footed beasts in the earth: wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.' And the interpretation of this to Peter was, that the catholic church under the New Testament should consist as of men from out of all nations of Noah's seed, whether clean or unclean, Jew or Gentile, who should now be converted to the faith of Christ; and that this was signified unto Peter by all these sorts of creatures. Now, bring this to Noah's ark and covenant, Genesis 7th and 9th chapters, the ancients readily understood the coming in of all nations under the gospel into the church to have been prefigured thereby. And how usual it is Scripture to set out the several sorts of wicked men under the similitude of beasts—as Herod by a fox, Nero by a lion, the circumcision by dogs—needs not be enlarged upon. I may therefore apply what God doth in Ezekiel touching his people, whom he had represented under the figure of sheep throughout chapter 34. He in the last verse, by way of exposition of that parable, 'The flock of my pasture are men,' says he; so, on the contrary, I may say, these beasts are men, the wickedness of men, and all kind of sinners of them. And truly when I consider how much that one alone in the Acts answers to the other in Genesis, and find in comparing both places the very same enumeration as to the kinds of these in both places, to be these generals, 'fowls of the air, beasts, and creeping things,' and how 'some of every sort' of these, are in both places pointed at, I could not reject this as a mere phantasm of man's imagination, it having so far the name of a Scripture for its warrant, as by this comparing these Scriptures together doth appear.” (*Works*, V9, pp77-78). *Francis Roberts*: “The ark had in it all variety of creatures, both clean and unclean; wolf and lamb, sheep and goats, etc. Yea in it was a cursed Ham, as well as a holy Noah and a blessed Shem. So the visible church, the spiritual ark has in it people of all nations, tongues and languages, of all sexes, ages, conditions and degrees; Jews and Gentiles; noble and ignoble; rich and poor; wise and foolish; bond and free; male and female; young and old. In this field, also are tares as well as wheat; in this net, bad, as well as good fish; in this house, foolish, as well as wise virgins; in this ark, hypocrites and reprobates, as well as the sincere and elect.” (p269). *Jonathan Edwards*: “A resorting of beasts and a flocking of birds, which is a lively resemblance of what is often foretold of the gathering of God's people into his church from all quarters in the Messiah's days, and coming to him for salvation when all the ends of the earth should look to him to be saved (Isaiah 45:22). When God should bring the seed of his church from the east, and gather them from the west, and would say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:6-7) and many other parallel places. And God would gather his people from all countries, agreeably to many prophecies, and it shall be said, Who are those that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? The gathering of all kinds of creatures to the ark, clean and unclean, tame and wild, gentle and rapacious, innocent and venomous; tigers, wolves, bears, lions, leopards, serpents, vipers, dragons; and the door of the ark standing open to them, and their all dwelling there peaceably together under one head, even Noah, who kindly received them and took care of them, fed and saved them, and to whom they tamely submitted, is a lively representation of what is often foretold concerning the Messiah's days, when it is foretold, that not only the Jews should be saved but unclean Gentile nations, when the gates of God's church should be open to all sorts of people (Isaiah 60:11 with the context), when proclamation should be made to every one to come freely (Isaiah 55:1-9).” *Nathan Pitchford*: “God's command to Noah to bring on board the ark representatives of every kind of animal. . . and to keep them there together safely in the bosom of the ark, from which, being preserved from the flood, they might go out again and repopulate the earth, was a very appropriate shadow of the gospel, by which people of every diverse tongue and nation, even those naturally disposed to tear and rend each other, would be brought together as one in Christ (see Ephesians 2:11-22), and be fruitful in bringing many diverse men and women into the Kingdom of God, where they might live in harmony forevermore (cf. Isaiah 11:6-9).” (*Images of Christ*).

Acts 10:10-12, “[Peter] fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat!’ But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholily and unclean. Again a voice came to him a second time, ‘What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.’”

Later we come to understand that the animals in the vision symbolized unclean Gentiles—and that God was teaching Peter that He is calling to himself through the gospel not just the clean but the unclean; not just ethnic Jews, but men from every tribe and tongue and nation under heaven.

Pretty amazing, right? And if you're still not convinced, also think about this: the way that God describes His covenant with Noah—which includes the animals—parallels the way God describes outside Gentile foreigners in His covenant with Abraham and in the New Covenant. In each covenant we see a distinctive 3-fold formula that includes both covenant children and outsiders.⁸⁹

COVENANT	3 FOLD FORMULA DESCRIBING THE RECIPIENTS OF THE COVENANT
THE NOAHIC COVENANT	“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you. . .of all that comes out of the ark.” (<i>Genesis 9:9-10</i>)
THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT	“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you. . .and every male among you. . .who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants” (<i>Genesis 17:7,12</i>)
THE NEW COVENANT	“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (<i>Acts 2:39</i>)

So in light of these Scriptures, and a lot of other Scriptures,⁹⁰ it's very probable that these animals that are gathered together to Noah in the ark do indeed symbolize the truth that men and women from every nation under heaven will be gathered together to Christ.⁹¹ Just as God brought to Noah, in pairs of two's and seven's, *every kind* of animal on the earth to be preserved with him in the ark, so too the Lord will gather to himself men from every tribe and tongue and people.⁹² It is this universal imagery that provides the foundation for the universal offer of the Christian gospel: We are to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).⁹³

8. The SIGN of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the picture of God's promise*

A *rainbow* is given as a sign of God's covenant with Noah (9:12-17). This is the first explicit teaching on covenant signs in the Bible. Later, we'll see that *circumcision* would be the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and *the Sabbath* would be the sign of God's covenant with Israel under Moses. What is the purpose of covenant signs? “*Covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. [A covenant sign] is a token and guarantee of the word of God.*”⁹⁴ Our sacraments—the Lord's supper and baptism—come from the idea of covenant signs. *A covenant sign is a tangible picture of God's everlasting pledge to His people.* So the rainbow is given here as a *picture* of God's *pledge*.

⁸⁹ Insight gleaned gratefully from Ligon Duncan in his course on *Covenant Theology*.

⁹⁰ See Isaiah 11:6-10; 30:6; 43:30; 56:9; 60:6-7; Hosea 2:18-23 with Romans 9:25; also Mark 7:24-30.

⁹¹ It is also fitting, in order to fore-picture various truths concerning salvation, that Noah's animals are both said to have been gathered into the ark by Noah on the one hand (Genesis 6:19; 7:2), and are said, on the other hand, to come to Him of their own accord, in order to keep them alive in the ark (Genesis 6:20). They are saved from the flood because they are *brought by Noah*; and they are saved from the flood because they *come to Noah*. Both are equally true. Later we are told that they freely come to Noah *because* God had first promised them to Noah (Genesis 7:8-9,16). This illustrates two truths: 1) we're saved because we come to Christ; and yet, 2) we only come to Christ because He himself draws us: “All that the Father gives Me *will come to Me*, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37). But why do they come? “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; *I must bring them also. . .*” (John 10:16; cf. John 12:39-43; Romans 9-10; 1 Peter 2:8; etc).

⁹² This might be stretching the analogy past its proper limit, but could there also be significance to the amount of clean and unclean animals? Why seven times the number of clean animals? Could it be that Scripture here is also fore-picturing the truths that Paul would write about in Romans 11? For there he tells us of an incredible revival that will one day occur among the Jews, following the “fullness of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:25), which will be so widespread and pervasive, that Paul tells us “all Israel will be saved.” (Romans 11:26). So that in the end, Jews *outnumber* Gentiles! (See *The Puritan Hope*, Murray).

⁹³ The last insight gleaned from O Palmer Robertson.

⁹⁴ Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*.

The *picture* was the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-13).⁹⁵ The *pledge* was that God would never again send a flood to destroy every living thing on the earth (Genesis 9:14-15). So the rainbow served as a very tangible picture of God's solemn promise. It was a *guarantee* to all those in the ark that the same wrath that swept away the rest of the world would never, ever, come upon *them*. Dark clouds may come again—God never promised it wouldn't rain anymore—but God's promise was that the rain would never again be sent in wrath for the purpose of flooding the earth. And again, remember that the promise God is making here is not *only* a temporal promise being made to every living thing in the world. Isaiah 54 makes clear that this promise is meant to teach us about the Covenant of Grace.

So, what does this teach us as believers in Christ? Well, one thing it teaches us is that as believers, dark storms may still come upon us. God never promised that the Christian life would be easy, that there would be no storms. But though the dark rain clouds will sometimes come—*the flood of God's wrath never will*. As believers, what we can know as we go through seasons of hardship and distress and confusion is that there's not a single drop of God's anger in the trials that He sends us.⁹⁶

We see this hinted at in another place in Scripture where we read about a rainbow. Revelation 4:3 says, "And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; *and there was a rainbow around the throne*, like an emerald in appearance." I love what one writer says about this: "this rainbow. . .[signifies] to us that memorial which God himself has of his everlasting kindness to his church in the midst of all thundering dispensations whatsoever, as a sign and symbol unto his church of the light of his countenance shining on them in their thickest and darkest clouds. . .And this New Testament rainbow excels that other [in that] the old was but as a half-moon rainbow, a semi-circle, whereas this is round about the throne, and encompasses it; it is a whole circle. . .So let God turn himself in various dispensations, and look which way he pleases, yet still he does, and must necessarily, view his church through his rainbow, putting him in mind of mercy."⁹⁷

Another thing that the covenant sign of the rainbow teaches us as believers relates to what is taking place when we partake of the sacraments. We mentioned that covenant signs are the foundation for our understanding of the sacraments: they are tangible *pictures* of God's unwavering *promises*. So, we should be thinking about the sacraments—the Lord's supper and baptism—as we read what God says in Genesis 9:14-16. First, in verses 14-15, notice that God is *not* saying, "Noah, when you see the bow in the cloud, you remember the covenant I made with you." No, God is saying to Noah: When *you* see the bow in the cloud, "*I* will remember." It's like a husband who gives a ring to his wife on their wedding day, and he says to her, "when *you* look at that ring, *I* will remember that I gave myself to you." The emphasis here is *God's remembering*.⁹⁸ When *we* see the sign, *God* remembers His covenant.⁹⁹ So when there is a baptism taking place, or when we partake of the Lord's Supper—it's not just *us* remembering what God has done—it's *God himself* remembering. When *we* eat and drink of Christ's body and blood, *God* remembers the promises He's made to us.

⁹⁵ Why a rainbow? How does a rainbow act as a picture of the Lord's promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood? *First, because of how it is described:* We can better understand another function of the rainbow in understanding the word that is used to describe it. The original Hebrew doesn't actually say, "rainbow," it just says "bow," and it is the exact same word that is used throughout Scripture for describing the battle war-bow (bow and arrow). The Lord is saying His wrath has been spent, and now He is hanging up His war-bow in the sky for all to see as living proof. *Second, because of when it is displayed:* God had destroyed the earth with rain; and rain comes from clouds. And so the Lord said to Noah, "*It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.*" (Genesis 9:14-15). In this way the rainbow is a picture of God's promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood. Even as the rain falls to the earth, the Lord sends with it the rainbow as a visible token of the promise He had made.

⁹⁶ "The rainbow is a divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth; so the covenant of grace guarantees against the deluge of God's wrath, that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ (Isa. 54:9)." (A.W. Pink, *Divine Covenants*).

⁹⁷ Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p79.

⁹⁸ "it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon God's memory, which is infinite and immutable. . .Oh, it is not my remembering God, it is God's remembering me which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant's laying hold on me. . .My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect." (*Charles Spurgeon*).

⁹⁹ The insights here were gratefully gleaned from Ligon Duncan's *Covenant Theology* course.

So verses 14-15 emphasize how when *we* look, *God* remembers. Then, in verse 16, God is the One who *will both look and remember* the sign: “When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant. . .” In verse 14, it's *us* who sees the rainbow and then God remembers His covenant. In verse 16, it's *God* who both looks at the sign and remembers His covenant. God gave the sign to Noah so that he could look at it—but isn't it glorious that even in giving the sign, *the important thing is not Noah looking at the sign and remembering God's promise—the important thing is that God looks at the sign and remembers His promise*—whether Noah looks at it or not. It's God's way of saying “I'm not going to forget the promise that I made to you. *You* may forget the promise I made to you—that's why I have to give you a sign—but *I will not* forget. . .”¹⁰⁰

9. The FRUIT of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the heart of the Christian life*

Let's turn back to Genesis 6:9. We looked at this passage before and saw that *Noah wasn't chosen because he was righteous—but rather Noah was righteous because he was chosen*. That is, Noah was changed into a righteous man only because God had first chosen him and saved him by grace. So earlier, we basically focused on what verse 9 *doesn't* mean; now we're going to focus in on what it *does* mean. And we read in verse 9, “. . .Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.” Now, the first thing we need to understand is that when Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, *it doesn't mean that he was perfect*. When you read through the Psalms and constantly see the contrast between “the righteous” and “the wicked,” it's not contrasting perfect people and sinners—there are no perfect people. It's talking about those who know and love and follow God and those who don't. And it's the same thing here. When Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, it's saying that he was a man of character; a man of integrity; a man who feared and loved and followed God—and his life proved it. *Noah's life backed up his profession*.

So, on the one hand, Noah wasn't a hypocrite. He lived out what he preached to others. He was a holy man. But also, on the other hand, Noah's righteousness wasn't just an *outward* righteousness. A lot of people thought the Pharisees of Jesus' day were a pretty righteous group of people, but the Savior called them “sons of hell” because their righteousness was nothing more than an external shell done for the applause of others. But Noah's righteousness wasn't like that—it was a true righteousness that went much deeper than just outward behavior. We're told that he was a man *who walked with God* (6:9). Noah was a righteous man because he was a man who lived in communion with God.

And this is the essence of the Christian life; walking with God. Now, remember, Noah was a preacher; Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness.” But that's not what characterized his life. What characterized his life was that he was a man who walked with God. It wasn't what Noah did—it wasn't his occupation or job title or even daily activities that God was concerned about—*it wasn't what Noah did* but *who he was* that God cared about. *God cares about who we are*. The goal of the Christian life isn't to do more and more stuff for God, or even to know more and more *about* God—*it's to know God more and more*: “This is eternal life, *that they may know You*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). So, knowing God is what eternal life is all about. Not knowing *about* God, but *knowing God*. And not *doing* a lot of stuff for God. That's what Martha tried to do, remember, in Luke 10? Martha was so busy doing things for Jesus that she missed the whole point. We're told she was “distracted with all her preparations” (Luke 10:40); and the word used there is actually one of the words Scripture uses for *ministry* (in Acts 6:4 and 2 Timothy 4:5).¹⁰¹ Martha was distracted with ministry. Doing a lot of stuff for Jesus, but her heart had become distant. Mary had chosen the good portion. The Christian life isn't about knowing about God—and it's not about doing things for God—it's about knowing and loving and walking with God. This is what God desires of us. This is the heart of the Christian life.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Duncan goes on: “And note that the sign does not procure God's blessing—it confirms it. The bow in the cloud is not what got blessing for Noah. What got blessing for Noah is God's election of him, God's promise to him, and God's redemption of him. The bow is given to confirm those things, not to procure them, but to confirm what God had already done. And now the sign confirms all of those things. So the sign does not procure the blessing; the sign confirms it.”

¹⁰¹ The Greek word is *diakonia*, from which we get the English word “deacon.”

10. The REQUIREMENTS of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how grace and obedience fit together*

So, walking with God is the essence of the Christian life. God wants us to be a holy people who worship Him in spirit and truth; who seek Him and love Him and know Him more and more. But how is it exactly that our obedience as believers fits together with God's grace? How is it exactly, for believers, that the law fits together with the gospel? How are we to think about the role of our obedience as those under God's grace? Well, let's read together what Scripture says in Genesis 9:3-7:

Genesis 9:3-7: ³Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. ⁴Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. ⁷As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.

This passages helps to show us a few ways that our Christian obedience fits together with God's grace:

A) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is commanded. In verse 3, God tells Noah and his sons that He has given every animal to them as food.¹⁰² Then in verse 4, the Lord forbids Noah and his sons to eat flesh with its blood.¹⁰³ So here in verse 4 we have a command; *God is giving Noah and his sons a command.* Then, in verse 7, the Lord essentially repeats what He had said in verse 1: “As for you; be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.” *This is another command* that the Lord is giving to Noah and his sons. And these commands are right in the middle of the covenant He's making with them; and as we've seen, this covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace. So what this means is that *there are commands in the Covenant of Grace*—God gives His people commands to obey. And if we love Him, we *will* keep His commands (John 14:15). Not perfectly, of course, as we even see later with Noah. But our lives will be characterized by obedience.

B) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is liberated. Notice that God does not make His covenant with Noah and his sons contingent on their obedience. God gives them a command in verse 4, and again, in verses 1 and 7 there are more commands: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” So God gives believers commands. But none of these commands are what merits God's blessing. God had already blessed Noah and his sons—they had already entered into His blessing. God does not say in verse 4, “*If* you keep My command about the animals and their blood, *then* I will confirm My covenant with you.” God's covenant isn't based on their obedience at all. God's commands to Noah and his sons are radically and entirely different than His command to Adam in the garden. In the garden, Adam's continuance in God's blessing was based entirely on his obedience to God's command. But in the Covenant of Grace it doesn't work that way. In the Covenant of Grace, we obey God's commands—not in order to be accepted by God—but because we've already been accepted by God in Christ. We obey our heavenly father, not in order to sustain His favor, but because Christ has already and entirely secured His favor through His finished work on the cross. We obey, not as a *Covenant of Works* but as a *rule of life*; we obey not *for* life but rather *from* life.

¹⁰² One thing that is important to see here is that this included both clean and unclean animals. Scripture had been distinguishing between clean and unclean animals throughout the account of Noah (Genesis 7:2,8-9; 8:20). So, when God tells Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9:3 that every animal has been given to them for food, we are to understand that as meaning both the clean and unclean animals. Under the Covenant of Grace, *all food* is clean. So, when Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:19), this wasn't a completely new teaching. At the beginning, all food was clean. God would later give stipulations about what was clean and unclean under the Law—but it wasn't because certain foods are inherently bad. Old Testament ceremonial laws were never intended to be taken merely at face value (compare Deuteronomy 23:1-3 with Isaiah 56:3-7 regarding eunuchs and foreigners). God gave the food regulations in the Law as a temporary arrangement to teach us about holiness—to be a tangible reminder that God's people are to be a holy people—a people set apart from the world.

¹⁰³ In some parts of Asia, an important question that arises here is if New Testament believers are hereby forbidden from consuming the blood of animals. The sense of the command seems to be aimed at respecting the sacredness of life rather than forbidding the consumption of the blood of animals. Ainsworth writes: “*With the soul:* Or, ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the life;’ for so the soul often signifies: Job 2:6; John 10:15,17. *The blood:* This declares what the former meant; ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the blood;’ . . . So this law against eating ‘flesh with the life or blood,’ seems to be against cruelty, not to eat any part while the creature is alive, or the flesh not orderly mortified and cleansed of the blood; 1 Sam. 14:32-34, and this the reason following does confirm. Also the Hebrew Doctors. . . understand to forbid the eating of any member, or of the flesh of a beast taken from it alive.” (*Genesis 9:4*). Waltke says: “By forbidding the eating of blood, this regulation instills a respect for the sacredness of life and protects against wanton abuse. . . Adding meat to the human diet is ‘not a license for savagery.’” (p144).

C) *In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is crucial.* In Genesis 9:5-6, we see that there are consequences for sin. Here in verses 5-6, God is actually establishing the ordinance of capital punishment; the one who intentionally and unlawfully sheds the blood of another is to have his blood shed in return.¹⁰⁴ Paul referenced the same truth when he said in Romans 13:4 that the state does not bear the sword for nothing, “for it is a minister of God to you for good.” God has given to human governments the power of enforcing capital punishment. The death penalty in cases of murder is not contrary to Scripture—but actually commanded in Scripture. So, we see that there are consequences for sin. And the same principle is true for us as believers.¹⁰⁵ Being a Christian doesn't mean that there's no longer going to be earthly consequences for your sin. King David didn't lose his salvation when committed adultery with Bathsheba and indirectly murdered her husband. But he sure plunged himself into an ocean of misery. So being in the Covenant of Grace doesn't mean there won't be very real consequences for our sin in this life. We ought to greatly fear our sin as Christians.

11. The PRIVILEGE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the mission God has given His people*

We read in Genesis 9:1, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'” We looked at this passage earlier in speaking about God's *blessing* of Noah. We saw how God is repeating here the same thing that He had spoken to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. And we saw that the reason this is so amazing was that when God blessed Adam, God was blessing a man who was not yet a sinner. But now, with Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9, God is repeating the same blessing *to sinners*. Through the atonement fore-pictured in Noah's burnt offerings, God is restoring to mankind the blessing that Adam had lost at the fall. Precious truths.

Well, what we're going to see here is that, in the Covenant of Grace, God is not only restoring the *blessing* of God—He's also restoring the *mission* of God. Just like the blessing of God, this command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth was the exact same command God had given to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. So, when the Lord said to Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” He was restoring to redeemed sinners the sacred privilege of filling the earth with His glory. And this command to Noah and his sons doesn't only point us *backwards* in Scripture—it also points us *forward*—to Christ and the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Think about it this way:

“The first Adam failed to carry out God's mandate. Now Jesus, the last Adam, is fulfilling the original mandate which God gave to humanity. . . God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, and to subdue it for God's glory. Jesus, the second Adam, has taken up that task. Just as the first Adam had a bride to serve as his helper (Gen.2:18-25), so the second Adam has chosen a bride to serve as his helper: the Church (Eph. 5:29-32). Together with his bride, Jesus is fulfilling the original mandate by filling the earth with regenerated images of God, who in turn submit to God's rule and subdue the earth for his glory. To state it a little differently, the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, has now become the Great Commission. . .”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ See Ainsworth, Calvin (a bit modified), O Palmer Robertson, etc. Ligon Duncan says: “Here see a direct command for capital punishment. . . So you see a nice little Hebrew parallelism here. He who sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, in that first phrase of Genesis 9:6. So this is not a statement of what will just inevitably happen, that when people kill, other people will kill them. This verse is explaining how God will demand an accounting for the manslayer, whether he is human or beast. . . like so many other principles, capital punishment existed prior to the Mosaic legislation as we see in Genesis chapter 9.” (*Covenant Theology* course). Waltke says: “The instruction about capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6) is set within the frame of the Lord's promise (8:20-22) and covenant (9:8-17), which is given to all humanity, to preserve all human life. In that context, the legislation to execute capital punishment pertains to all people (9:5-6). Capital punishment is founded upon the truth that all human beings bear the image of God, setting them apart from the rest of the living creatures. . . The legislation, 'whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed,' gives evidence that the civil authority as God's minister now has the responsibility to execute capital punishment for a capital offense.” (Waltke, pp157-58).

¹⁰⁵ Not only is this very principle of a life for a life reiterated in the Law, which was given as God's rule for the church, but the very giving of the principle is in the context of God's covenant in Genesis 9, which again, is part of the Covenant of Grace. Another example of this principle is the familiar refrain through the book of Deuteronomy: “that it may be well with you. . .”

¹⁰⁶ Taken from *The Cultural Mandate and Your Work Today*, Hugh Welchel, theresurgence.com/2013/08/29. The quote finishes, “. . . which God has given to Christ (Isa. 42:1-12; 49:1-26), and through Christ to the church (Matt.28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8; 13:47; Rom. 15:18). We could even say it a little differently than that: the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, *has always been* the Great Commission. The mission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it was never intended to be taken *only* in a physical, temporal kind of way. God's plan from the beginning was to fill the earth with His glory in the fullest possible sense (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Isaiah 27:6 says, “In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit.” The fruit

It's also good to be reminded again here of the context of Genesis 9:1. God gives this awesome privilege to Noah and his sons immediately after we are told that the flood hadn't cured man's nature. Genesis 8:21 reminds us that Noah and his sons are still a people that struggle with sin; they're still sinners. *So who is God going to use in powerful ways to fill the earth with His glory? Christians who still find themselves struggling with sin.* By the way, we see the same truth in Matthew 28. Who does Jesus send out in the Great Commission? Right before verse 18 we have verse 17: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; *but some were doubtful.*" These are the people Jesus was pleased to send out to the world and use to gather entire nations and kingdoms. Jesus is pleased to use us as His instruments—not just on our best days or when we're following Him the closest—but even in the midst of our worst failures and blunders. He uses us in the midst of our sin. He's pleased to use struggling, failing Christians—weak and broken vessels—to do wonderful things for His glory.

And this isn't just something for pastors or missionaries. If you're a believer in Jesus, this awesome privilege is for *you*, wherever He may call you to serve. Whether you're a minister or a mechanic or a mom—God has given you this *sacred privilege*—to fill your little section of the earth with His glory. Whoever you are, wherever you are; you can *teach, live, pray* and *give* to God's global mission of redemption. In Christ, your life has incredible eternal significance, whatever it is that you do.¹⁰⁷

So, God gives His people a charge: "Be fruitful and multiply" (9:1,7). But again, God's covenant *is in no way conditional on us keeping this charge.* God doesn't say to Noah and his sons, "If you are fruitful and multiply, *then* I will confirm My covenant with you." God gives Noah and his sons a commission, but His covenant with Noah—His peace and blessing—was never based on obedience to that mission. And that's exactly the way it is in the gospel. God has given us commands. And God has given us a mission: to fill the earth with His glory. But God never says to us: "If you go and make disciples of all nations, *then* I will bless you and give you My peace. God has given us His blessing and peace to the fullest measure—and it's in that knowledge that we fill the earth with His glory.

12. The OUTCOME of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of the sure hope we have in Christ*

When Noah stepped out of the ark, along with his family and the animals, he entered into a new world; an earth that had been purged of wickedness and recreated in holiness and righteousness.¹⁰⁸ Scripture emphasizes this when it tells us in Genesis 8:13 that the day the water was dried up from the earth was the first day of the first month of the first year since the flood. Now, on the one hand, this is to signify the new birth. Scripture refers to believers as "new creations" in Christ, because when God saves someone, everything about them becomes new—new desires, new longings, a new will, a new purpose, a new Lord.¹⁰⁹ Just as it was with the earth, we have become new creations in Christ. So in one sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers experience in *regeneration.*

But in another sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers will experience in *glorification.* When Noah and his family and the animals stepped off the ark, they became the inheritors of a new earth. And this is to signify the coming reality for all those in Christ. For, "according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:3-13).¹¹⁰

Isaiah is talking about here isn't figs or grapes—it's the work of the Spirit imparting life and changing lives for the glory of God (See also Isaiah 4:2; 37:31; Hosea 14:4-8; John 15:1-5,8; Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22-23). God's desire from Genesis 1 was a people who worship Him in Spirit and truth. So when God said to Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," He was giving them (in Old Testament language) the sacred honor of participating in His global plan of redemption.

¹⁰⁷ We could add here that being fruitful and multiplying in the truest intended sense isn't just an awesome privilege God has given the redeemed—it's also one of the purposes of redemption: Romans 7:4 says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, *in order that we might bear fruit for God.*" It may be that this truth is also being hinted at in the story of Noah. In light of what we discovered about the possible significance of the animals together with Noah on the ark, we may hear Romans 7:4 being echoed in Genesis 8:17, where the Lord said to Noah: "Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

¹⁰⁸ "They came out of the ark as out of the grave; and that into a new world." (Francis Roberts, p279).

¹⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:15; 4:24; Colossians 3:10.

¹¹⁰ See also 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and Revelation 21:1-8. Waltke says: "The theme of this *toledot*, the annihilation of the

Now, let's meditate on this theme of glorification a little more. Scripture tells us that every living thing that entered into the ark also went out together with Noah from the ark (8:17-19): "Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird. . .went out by their families from the ark" (v19). No life was lost through the storm. In the same way, Scripture tells us that Christ will bring home to glory with Him every single person who has been united to Him by faith—no exceptions. Jesus said, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). In Romans 8:29-30, Paul describes our hope of glory as believers with such certainty that he uses the past tense: "and these whom He justified, He also glorified." The reality of inheriting eternal glory is so certain for believers that we can talk about it in the past tense.¹¹¹

God wants us to live in this hope. He could have saved us without letting us know all He had done and all He had promised to do. But He didn't do that—He wants us to know; He wants us to live in the absolute assurance that He who promised is faithful; that He will bring us home to glory. Friends, if you belong to Jesus, then you are inside the ark of salvation, and there is only one destination. You may feel like a lowly worm—but even the worms that boarded the ark were brought safely through to the new world! He will do what He promised; and He wants you and I to live upon that promise! He wants us to know that we are bound for glory. We may feel the wind and the waves—of course we will—but if we are in the ark we have nothing to fear. The day is quickly coming when we who have entered into the ark will again step out into a new world, to live and reign with Christ forever: "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

V. A Few Final Applications from the Noahic Covenant

1. There are WARNINGS here:

A) A warning to THE WORLD of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come: Jesus said in Luke 17:26-27: "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." There is a warning for us here. The final judgment will come the same way that it did with the flood. There will be no time to suddenly change your mind; it will be like a lightning flash. *Now* is the acceptable time; *today* is the day of salvation. I'm not sure how Noah's neighbors reacted to his preaching. Maybe they laughed at him; maybe they ignored him. But then, one day, the door shut, and the sky began to get incredibly black. Perhaps it was a giant tsunami.¹¹² Maybe they saw a great wave from a distance and started banging on the ark for Noah to open the door. But it was too late. The final judgment is coming, whether the world is ready for it or not. Flee to Christ, the only ark of salvation.

B) A warning to THE CHURCH of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come: The warning isn't just for those *outside* of the church. Though Noah's son Ham was safe in the ark when the flood came, in the end he showed himself to be of the seed of the serpent (Genesis 9:20-27). He had been in the ark like the rest of Noah's family. He was a member of Noah's church. He was a covenant

seed of the Serpent's kingdom and the earth they have corrupted and the preservation of the seed of the woman through it to a renewed earth, foreshadows the future destruction of this present, evil world by fire and the preservation of the faithful by the specified salvation in Christ to inherit a regenerated earth that will never pass away (Matt.24:30-31,37-39; Luke17:26-32; 2 Thess.1:5-9; 2Peter 3:6-7). The elect covenant family going through a sea of death and coming forth from their burial chamber (Isa.26:19-21) is a pledge that the redeemed will be brought through the cataclysm of the final judgment." (Waltke, pp151-52).

¹¹¹ And it's not only certain because God has *promised* it to His people; it's certain because God has *purposed* it for His people. This is hinted at in Genesis 7:2-3, "You shall take with you of every clean animal. . .and of the animals that are not clean. . .also of the birds of the sky. . .to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth." The whole reason the animals were kept in the ark was to repopulate the new world. This also points us to God's purposes for us in salvation. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, "But God, being rich in mercy. . .made us alive together with Christ. . .and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In other words, the whole reason God saved us was in order that He might forever lavish the riches of His kindness upon us—*not just in this life—but for all eternity*. Paul says the same thing in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." We also see this dual foundation for assurance, both God's *promise* and God's *purpose*, in Hebrews 6:13-20.

¹¹² May be hinted at in Isaiah 54:9, where the Hebrew reads that God swore the waters would not "cross over" the earth again.

child, and a professor of the true religion. But it seems that after the flood had died down, he began to show his true colors. In the end, all his offspring are cursed. So it will be in the resurrection of the dead. Our Savior tells us that there will be *many* on that day who will be thrust out of the kingdom. But they are not atheists or Hindus or Muslims or Buddhists. They had been professors of the true religion. They were those who had called Jesus “Lord,” and even those who had healed and cast out demons in his name (Matt.7:21-23). Maybe some of them had been powerful preachers or the kind of Christians known for their incredible zeal for Christ. But you know what? They never really knew Christ. Just like Ham sat in the ark, all their lives they sat in the church. But they missed the reality. They were part of the *visible* church, but never true members of the church *invisible*. They busied themselves doing Christian things all their life, but they had never truly known Christ, and on the day of judgment they will be cast away. My friends: Don't let this happen to you.

2. There are COMFORTS here:

In God's dealings with Noah and his family in the ark, we are given a precious insight into the heart of God towards His people in the midst of all their distresses. Let's read Isaiah 54 one more time:

Isaiah 54:9-11: ⁹For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. ¹⁰For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken. ¹¹*O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. . .*

Verses 9-10 of Isaiah 54 teach us about the surety and stability of God's people in the Covenant of Grace—they refer back to the promise that God had made *after* the flood. But here in verse 11, we get a precious glimpse into God's disposition towards His people *in the midst* of the flood. Verse 11 tells us what God was experiencing as His people were being battered to and fro, and swept up and down on the waves in the ark. Listen to how one pastor describes God's words here in verse 11:

“There is no speech or passage which we find our God to utter in Scripture more pathetic or passionate than this. . . than to hear God, in the midst of their afflictions and temptations, cry out on the sudden, and with the greatest vehemency, *'O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempests, and not comforted!*. . . it is as if the dearest friend, or most loving husband or father, having his dearest relations of wife, and children, and friends in a ship at sea, and viewing them to sit within the rage of wild waves and winds, which he, standing himself safe on the immediate shore, sees and beholds with his own eyes, and at every bending of the ship near to a suppression under those waves, his heart beats, and he lamentably cries out at every toss and motion, and thinks with himself, how must their hearts be afflicted, and not comforted in the midst of all, that are shiftless and helpless in this storm, and know not what to do! Like to such a one doth God express his affections here.”¹¹³

Our days as pilgrims in this world are like Noah's voyage in the ark. The Lord has saved us from His judgment and brought us into the ark of salvation, who is our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we know that the day is coming soon when we will step out into a new world; a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells. But the voyage can be long. It can be hard. It can be scary. At times we are storm-tossed. We feel like we're reeling, and there's no comfort. We wonder, *where is God?* It's in those moments that we need to fight with all that we have to believe the truth expressed in this verse: God isn't unmoved by the sufferings and trials we go through in this life. He's not indifferent when we're hurting or reeling, or when we're lonely and scared. His heart goes out to us, even as He also sovereignly guides us. And the day is quickly coming when He will usher us home to himself.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Thomas Goodwin, *Works V9*, p75.

¹¹⁴ “The ark was a great while tossed to and fro on the face of the flood, ready to be overwhelmed; but at last rested on a high mountain or rock, and the company in it had enlargement and liberty, and were brought into a new world. So the church in the Messiah's days is long in a state of affliction, tossed with tempest and not comforted (Isaiah 54:11). But when she is ready to be overwhelmed, God will lead her to the rock that is higher than she (Psalm 61:2), and she shall be brought out of her affliction into a new world (Isaiah 65:17-18), and shall dwell in God's holy mountain.” (Edwards, *Types of the Messiah*).