

The Rainbow
Gen 8:20-22; 9:8-17
SS Lesson for 09/03/2017

Devotional Scripture: Isa 54:9-14

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews the promise and the unconditional nature of God's covenant related to **The Rainbow**. The **study's aim** is to grow in confidence that God is faithful to His promises. The **study's application** is to recall God's promise and faithfulness at all times, especially when seeing a rainbow. NOTE: the majority of the content of this lesson was copied from a previous lesson dated 06/22/2013.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Gen 9:11

Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

8:1-3. The heavy rains lasted 40 days (7:4, 12), but the waters continued on for 110 days (cf. 7:24, "The waters flooded the earth for 150 days"; KJV has "the waters prevailed"). The 40 days were part of the 150 days, with apparently lighter **rain** falling (or subterranean water upheavals continuing for another 110 days; see the chart "Chronology of the Flood").

8:4-19. **The ark** rested in **the mountains of Ararat** 150 days after the rains began. Assyrian records may identify such a name in Armenia of eastern Turkey, but the precise location remains unknown. After it was clear that the earth was suitable for habitation, the eight people and all **the animals** left **the ark**. This was 377 days after they had entered it (cf. 7:11 with 8:13-14). The theme of "rest" seems to be quite strong throughout the story. The ark rested (v. 4); at first **the dove could find no place to set its feet** (v. 9; lit., "could not find a resting place for its feet"). When the ark came to rest on Ararat, this was more than a physical landing on dry ground. It was a new beginning; the world was clean and at rest.

8:20-22. Leaving the ark, **Noah** made a sacrifice to God, which was a **pleasing aroma** to Him. The people of God are a worshipping people, as Israel would learn, and that worship was to take the form of giving God some of the best of what was His. The redeemed of the Lord offer Him the praise of their lips (Heb. 13:15), the best of their possessions (Prov. 3:9), and the willingness and humility of their spirits. Noah received God's grace, walked with God in obedience and righteousness, was preserved from judgment, entered a new age with people's wickedness temporarily removed, and responded with worship and sacrifice. After Noah made the sacrifice, God promised **never to curse the ground** in this way again. The continuity of seasons is evidence of God's forbearance.

9:1-4. God instructed Noah to **be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth** (vv. 1, 7) just as He had told Adam (1:28). And Noah, like Adam, was to have dominion over animals (9:2; cf. 1:26, 28). Also both were given food to eat (9:3; cf. 1:29; 2:16) with one prohibition (9:5-6; cf. 2:17).

9:5-7. With Noah's new beginning came a covenant. It was necessary now to have a covenant with obligations for mankind and a promise from **God**. Because of the Flood's destruction of life people might begin to think that God holds life cheap and assume that taking life is a small matter. This covenant shows that **life** is sacred and that **man** is not to destroy **man**, who is made **in the image of God**. In essence, then, this covenant was established to ensure the stability of nature. It helped guarantee the order of the world. People would also learn that human law was necessary for the stability of life and that wickedness should not go unchecked as it had before. So human government was brought in.

9:8-17. That this **covenant** (vv. 9, 11-13, 15-17) is cosmic and universal (**every living creature**, vv. 10 [twice], 12; **all living creatures**, vv. 15-16; **all life**, vv. 11, 15, 17) is seen from the **rainbow** God gave as a **sign** (vv. 12-13, 17). When it arches over the horizon after a rainfall it is an all-embracing sign of God's faithfulness to His work of grace. Signs remind participants in a **covenant** to keep the stipulations. In the rainbow God, who is omniscient, perpetually reminds Himself (repeated in vv. 15-16) **never to flood** the whole world again (vv. 11, 15). Since no rain had fallen before the Flood (2:5), no rainbow was needed. Now when clouds clear, light refraction shows this marvelous display. The rainbow arcs like a battle bow hung against the clouds. (The Heb. word for rainbow, *qeshet*, is also the word for a battle bow.) Elsewhere in the Old Testament God referred to judgment storms by using terms for bows and arrows. The bow is now "put away," hung in place by the clouds, suggesting that the "battle," the storm, is over. Thus the rainbow speaks of peace. In the ancient Near East, covenant treaties were made after wars as a step toward

embarking on peace. Similarly God, after judging sin, made a **covenant** of peace. Israel certainly would be strengthened to see in the skies again and again God's pledge that He keeps His promise of grace. But certainly it also reminded the faithful in Israel that God's judgment was completed for that age. Judgment will come once again in the end times (Zech. 14:1-3; Rev. 19:15) before there can be complete millennial peace and rest (Rev. 20:6). So Genesis 9:8-17 anticipates that in the end Israel will beat her swords into plowshares (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3). In the meantime life goes on in a new order; the divine will of forbearance, "common grace," is at work until that end.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

It is often hard to trust God in this world. Things happen. Life has many twists and turns. Disappointments are frequent. God can seem absent. But God has at times given us signs of His presence to remind us that He is alive, sovereign, and devoted to His redeemed people. God's signs go way back to the earliest beginnings of His dealings with humanity. Even the lights of the heavens were called "signs" in the Creation narrative; they help humanity find its way in this world (Gen. 1:14). We should consider a few of these signs to properly understand how we are to walk with God through this world. The first sign we will consider is the sign of the rainbow, given after the destruction of the earth by water in Noah's time. The rainbow is a sign of a covenant God made with man. A covenant is an agreement that carries with it certain promises and obligations. When God establishes a covenant with man, it has a gracious aspect. God is promising something and obligating Himself to be faithful to what He has promised. When we see a rainbow, it is a sign that God will never again destroy the world by a flood. What does this mean for us? First, it was a promise given to the whole world. This sign came early, before Israel and before the church existed. It was given to common humanity. The promise found in the sign of the rainbow goes out graciously to the whole world. As time has marched along, the world has grown more complex and diverse. Yet the promise of this covenant remains true to all. Second, it represents the gift of God's grace. God showed His willingness to enter into a covenant with us, His willingness to bind Himself graciously into a relationship with His sinful creatures. Even today He continues to be willing to receive the sinner by faith in Christ. His promise of a relationship is intact. The sign of the rainbow reminds us not only that God will never again destroy the world by a flood but also that He is a covenant-making God and a sinner-receiving God. Third, the sign of the rainbow shows the gift of time. God's Word states that as long as there are storms and rain and sunshine afterward, producing the rainbow, there is still time to enter a covenant with God. Obviously it is dangerous to presume that we have plenty of time. I always fear for the person who says, "I will come to God and receive salvation through Christ, but not yet." The truth is that none of us knows how much time we have left. We could depart from this life at any time. How good it was of God to give us a sign of His grace for all generations! We see His gracious gift of time in the sign of the rainbow. This is made emphatic in Genesis 9:9, in which God added that He would confirm His covenant with Noah and all his descendants. Each generation can look up at the rainbow and know that God is gracious. There is time left to come to the place of salvation. It is a sign to prompt and guide us in this world.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A quick glance at an object, image, or document can give us information in an instant. When we see a diamond on the ring finger of a woman's left hand, we immediately know that a proposal for marriage has been accepted. The presence of a license plate on an automobile indicates that the vehicle is allowed to operate on public roads. That framed diploma in our doctor's office assures us that he or she has completed a course of study in preparation for treating our ailments. By these and many other visual devices we communicate. It should not surprise us, then, that God does the same. Today we will look at a sign from God that communicates not only an important promise but also a fact of history.

The biblical account of the great flood is but one of at least five ancient flood stories. The existence of the latter leads some to believe that the biblical account used them as sources, and that the flood is a legendary myth of an ancient and ignorant people. But if there truly was a great flood in ancient times, then stories of the event would be passed down from generation to generation. As people spread over the earth and formed distinct cultures, these stories would take on the characteristics of those cultures. It would be strange indeed if accounts of the actual great flood were absent altogether from ancient writings! So the existence of the nonbiblical stories actually serves to confirm that there was indeed a great flood at some point in history. The Bible's account of this flood is the accurate one. The Bible's unerring track record on other historical matters and the divine

inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) assure us of this fact. The biblical account of the great flood is detailed in giving specifics for the beginning of the flood, the length of time the rain fell, how long the floodwaters covered the earth, and how long it took for the waters to recede. The total amount of time adds up to a little more than a year (Genesis 7:11; 8:14).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Covenant Promise (Gen 8:20-22)

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

22 "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease."

A promise worthy of worship (20)

Worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Worship to glorify God (Phil 3:3)

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh

Worship with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Worship because we are God's people (Ps 95:6-7)

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; 7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

A promise of grace (21)

Grace that provides blessings (John 1:16)

16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Grace that is given to His people (Rom 5:15)

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Grace that is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Grace that is part of God's predestined plan (Eph 1:5-7)

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

A promise that endures (22)

Promises and purposes that stand forever (Ps 33:11)

11 But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Promises God remembers forever (Ps 105:8)

8 He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,

Promises that are eternal (Heb 9:15)

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Promises confirmed by an oath (Deut 4:31)

31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.

The Covenant Bond (Gen 9:8-11)

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

9 "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

10 and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

11 Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

Bond with humans (8-9)

Bond with humans motivated by compassion (Isa 54:8-10)

8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. 9 "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Bond with humans through Jesus becoming human (Rom 1:2-4)

2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Bond with humans so that Satan's slavery could be destroyed (Heb 2:14-18)

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Bond with humans because God is sovereign (2 Sam 7:18-19)

"Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? 19 And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?"

Bond with animals (10)

Bond with animals because God is good to all He created (Ps 145:9)

9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

Bond with animals because He knows they need food (Matt 6:26)

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Bond with animals because God can provide better than man (Matt 6:28-29)

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.
29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

Bond with animals because they look to God to satisfy them (Ps 104:25-29)

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small. 26 There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. 27 These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

Bond components (11)

Forty days of flood (Gen 7:17-21)

17 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. 18 The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. 19 They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. 20 The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. 21 Every living thing that moved on the earth perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.

God's promise (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

God's patience (2 Peter 3:5-9)

5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God's power (Ps 104:6-9)

6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.

Seven Lessons Learned from the Flood (from Explore the Book by J Sidlow Baxter)

Noah and those who were saved with him in the Ark are remarkably typical of Christian believers, and of the Church as a whole, in *seven outstanding ways*. (See Gen 6-9)

1. Chosen.

They were made party to a covenant (6:18). This covenant, in which they were chosen to salvation, was made 120 years before the Flood came, as it would seem from chapter 6:3 with 6:8. Even so, Christian believers are a chosen people." God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess 2:13)." He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4).

2. Called.

The Ark was entered in response to a Divine call." The Lord said unto Noah: Come thou and all thy house into the Ark" (Gen 7:1). Similarly, the true people of Christ, besides being eternally chosen in Him, are brought into their vital union with Christ by a Divine call. Thus we read in Rom 13:30," Moreover, whom He (God) did predestinate, them He also called." And in 1 Cor 1:9, we read," God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son."

3. Believers.

Noah built the Ark, and entered it with his family, because he believed God (7:4 with 7:7). See also Heb 11 - "By faith Noah . . . prepared an Ark." So the people of Christ are distinctively believers. See Heb 10:39 - "We are of them who believe to the saving of the soul"; (and many other passages). Note: Noah's faith made him obedient (Gen 6:22; 7:5). So is it with the Christian (1 Peter 1:22; Rom 16:26; etc.). Noah's faith also brought him imputed righteousness (Heb 11:7 with Gen 7:1). So is it with the faith of the Christian believer (Rom 5:1; 10:4).

4. Separated.

The Ark which effected salvation also involved separation. Noah was already separated from his wicked generation, in the spirit and tenor of his life. His entering the Ark was the outward culmination of it. Christians also are a separated people." They are not of the world" (John 17:16); "A people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9, Rv.); and accordingly we are exhorted to make our separation a practical and obvious thing, - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor 6:17).

5. Sealed.

Besides being told that "they went in" to the Ark, we are told that "the Lord shut him in" (Gen 7:16). Thus were the occupants of the Ark inviolably sealed by God Himself unto the day of salvation after the Flood. So are Christian believers sealed." After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13)." Ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30)." He which established us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who also hath sealed us" (2 Cor 1:29.).

6. Risen.

The higher the Flood prevailed the more the Ark rose above it. When the guilty world was beneath the Flood of judgment and death, those in the Ark were risen above it and were alive! (Gen 7:17-19). Thus in a remarkable figure the Ark meant life out of death. This has its counterpart in the experience of the Christian." The Ark was . . . the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)." Risen with Christ" (Col 3:1).

7. Rewarded.

They not only survived the Flood, they became the possessors of a new world (Gen 8:15-19). So is it to be with the redeemed in Christ." We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). See also Rev 21:1-4. Note the outstanding facts about Noah's occupation of the new world:(1) Fragrant fellowship (8:20); (2) The "curse" stayed (8:21); (3) A perpetual covenant (9:12, etc.). Even so is it in the "new heaven and new earth" for which Christian believers look (Rev 7:15-17; 22:3-5, with 4:3).

The Covenant Sign (Gen 9:12-17)

12 And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

14 It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

15 and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Sign of the rainbow (12-13)

Sign of the rainbow is God's faithful witness in the sky (Ps 89:35-37)

35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness — and I will not lie to David — 36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; 37 it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky."

Sign of the rainbow is a sign that God will do what He promised (Isa 38:7)

7 "This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised:

Sign of the rainbow should be a constant remembrance of God and His power (1 Cor 11:23-26)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Sign significance (14-15)

Significant because when we are sinful, God will remember His covenant (Lev 26:42-45)

42 I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. 44 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord."

Significant because God is faithful in keeping His covenant of love (Deut 7:9)

9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

Significant because God is attentive to our prayers for the sake of His covenant (Ps 106:43-45)

43 Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. 44 But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; 45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

Significant because of God's unfailing love (Isa 54:8-10)

8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. 9 "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Sign between God and all living creatures (16-17)

Sign of God's promises to all living creatures (Gen 8:20-21)

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21 The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

Sign of God's covenant promises to all descendants (Gen 17:19)

19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Sign of God's kindness and compassion to all creatures (Isa 54:8-10)

8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. 9 "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Sign for all the other creation of God eagerly awaiting redemption (Rom 8:19-22)

19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Divine Commitment (8:20-22)

You will be aware that these last verses of Genesis chapter eight were discussed in my last message. While these three verses are not a part of the Noahic Covenant, they surely are a prelude to it. Therefore, we must begin our study with them.

Technically, Genesis 8:20-22 is not a promise which God gave to Noah. Rather it is a purpose confirmed in the heart of God.

And 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' (Genesis 8:21).

These are not words spoken to Noah, they are purposes reaffirmed in the mind of God. Covenant theologians place much emphasis on two or three theological covenants: the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption.⁹⁵ All of these covenants, while they may well be 'biblical' in essence, are implicit, rather than explicit. Covenant theologians usually tend to emphasize these implied theological covenants at the expense of the clearly biblical covenants, such as the Noahic Covenant. On the other hand, dispensational theologians often stress the biblical covenants and disparage the theological covenants.

In Genesis chapters 8 and 9 both elements are to be found. The eternal purpose of God to save men was made long before the days of Noah (cf. Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; II Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 1:9, etc.). What we find in Genesis 8:20-22 is not the creation of God's purpose to save men, but the confirmation of that purpose in history. Just as God reaffirmed His purpose here, such recommitment is often good for men as well (cf. Philippians 3:8-16).

The covenant of God with Himself was occasioned by the sacrifices offered up by Noah (Genesis 8:20). God's resolve was to never again destroy the earth by a flood (cf. 9:11). I understand the words, "... I will never again

curse the ground on account of many... ” (verse 21), to be parallel with the following expression, “... and I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done” (verse 21).⁹⁶

The reason for God’s resolve is based upon the nature of man: “For the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21).

Righteous Noah (6:9) will soon be found naked in a drunken stupor (9:21). No matter how many times the earth’s slate is wiped clean by a flood, the problem will remain if but one man exists. The problem is within man—it is his sinful nature. His predisposition toward sin is not learned, it is innate—he is “evil from his youth.” As a result, a full restoration must begin with a new man. This is what God historically purposed to accomplish.

This purpose is partially expressed in verse 22: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

The Noahic Covenant (9:8-17)

God’s covenant with Noah and his descendants displays many of the characteristics of subsequent covenants which God had made with man. For this reason, we shall highlight some of the covenant’s more obvious features.

(1) The Noahic Covenant was initiated and dictated by God. The sovereignty of God is clearly seen in this covenant. While some ancient covenants were the result of negotiation, this one was not. God initiated the covenant as an outward expression of His purpose revealed in Genesis 3:20-22. God dictated the terms of the covenant to Noah, and there was no discussion.

A friend of mine owned a car that was ‘on its last leg.’ With my encouragement, he went to a car lot to find something more dependable. He found a car which showed promise but decided to give the matter more deliberation. When he got into his old car to leave, it wouldn’t start. As you can imagine, my friend was in no position to bargain. He took the other car without any negotiation concerning the price. That was precisely the situation of Noah. And I might add, would we dare to question God’s terms today? I think not!

(2) The Noahic Covenant was made with Noah and all successive generations: “And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creation that is with you, for all successive generations;’” (Genesis 9:12).

This covenant will remain in force until the time when our Lord returns to the earth to cleanse it by fire (II Peter 3:10).

(3) This is a universal covenant. While some covenants involve a small number, this particular covenant includes “all flesh.” That is, all living creatures, including man and animals:

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, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth (Genesis 9:9,10).

(4) The Noahic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. Some covenants were contingent upon both parties carrying out certain stipulations. Such was the case of the Mosaic covenant. If Israel kept the law of God, they would experience the blessings and prosperity of God. If not, they would be expelled from the land (Deuteronomy 28). The blessings of the Noahic covenant were not conditional. God would give regularity of seasons and would not destroy the earth by a flood simply because He said so. While certain commands were given to mankind in verses 1-7, these are not viewed as conditions to the covenant. They are technically not included as a part of the covenant.

(5) This covenant was God’s promise never again to destroy the earth by a flood: “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 9:15).

God will destroy the earth by fire (II Peter 3:10), but only after salvation has been purchased by the Messiah and the elect are removed, even as Noah was protected from the wrath of God.

(6) The sign of the Noahic Covenant is the rainbow:

I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall 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 9:13-15).

Every covenant has its accompanying sign. The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is circumcision (Genesis 17:15-27); that of the Mosaic Covenant is the observance of the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17).

The “sign” of the rainbow is appropriate. It consists of the reflection of the rays of the sun in the particles of moisture in the clouds. The water which destroyed the earth causes the rainbow. Also, the rainbow appears at the end of a storm. So this sign assures man that the storm of God’s wrath (in a flood) is over.

Most interesting is the fact that the rainbow is not designed so much for man’s benefit (in this text, at least) but for God’s. God said that the rainbow would cause Him to remember His covenant with man. What a comfort to know that God’s faithfulness is our guarantee.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/noahic-covenant%E2%80%94new-beginning-genesis-820-917>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Being something of a grammar purist, I chafe when I hear people say “I promise” when they really mean “I assure you.” Sometimes the two are interchangeable, but sometimes they are not. An example of the latter is when someone says “I promise you, I was not the one who did that.” A promise always looks to the future. I can make assurances about the past, but I can promise only for the future, as in “I promise I will never do such a thing again!” God promised that “never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life” (Genesis 9:15). The rainbow assures us that he will keep his promise.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. Worship that honors God begins with our obedience (Gen. 8:20)
2. God loves us in spite of our sin and pursues a relationship with us (vs. 21)
3. Everything in creation reveals God's faithfulness (vs. 22)
4. God has included all living creatures in the covenant He established with Noah (9:8-10)
5. God has given the rainbow as His personal assurance that we can take Him at His word (vss. 11-13)
6. When difficulties arise in life, remember the promises of God (vs. 14)
7. God will always remember and honor His promises (vss. 15-17)