



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“The Noahic Covenant”

TRANSCRIPT

Our subject is “The Noahic Covenant and Eschatology.” Among the things that we have been stressing are these in our short series so far on the subject of Eschatology. A few weeks ago we spoke about the nature of the covenantal system which is so important for reading the Bible with understanding. We tried to point out the relationship for example between the covenants and the dispensations. We pointed to Mr. Scofield’s note in his edition of the King James version in which he defines a dispensation as a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.

Without dealing with whether that definition is precise or not, I think all would agree that dispensations are ways of looking at the progress of divine revelation from the human standpoint, whereas the covenants are the program of God from the divine standpoint, and so when we speak of the relationship of covenants to dispensations, we are talking about the relationship between the divine undertakings to the human side of this undertaking, or these under-undertakings, and I pointed out or tried to point out that the covenants are successive stages in the unfolding of Messianic grace. This is the reason for the covenantal system. It represents the stages in which God unfolds for our

understanding and reception the Messianic grace which reaches its climax in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also stressed the fact that in the Bible it is obvious that there is necessarily a plan of God, because God is an intelligent being. Intelligent beings ordinarily have plans, and we read in the Bible that God does have a plan. It is referred to in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 11 where Paul speaks about the purpose of the ages or the eternal purpose. We saw also a specific outworking of that in the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in Acts chapter 2 and verse 23 it is specifically stated with reference to the ministry of the Lord in his death that he came by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God, so that the ministry of our Lord Jesus was something that was determined before it came into existence. So, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the Lord Jesus Christ died.

Now intermingled with that of course is human responsibility, and so Peter in the statement in which he says that the Lord Jesus came by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, says that those who were responsible for his death had with wicked hands taken him and crucified him. But it is evident that the coming of our Lord and the ministry of our Lord was according to the plan and purpose of God, and represented a specific issue of the eternal program of God. We also suggested that this was related to the eternal purpose of God, and that he is carefully working out that eternal purpose and the Lord Jesus Christ’s death as part of it.

We tried to define a covenant as a gracious undertaking to confer the blessing of God upon men, and we pointed out that there are two types of covenants, one of which stresses the fact that men must do something, and these are covenants of works. There are not many of them in the Bible. The great majority are covenants of grace in which God undertakes to do something apart from any conditions being laid upon men.

We also talked about the theological covenants. Now these covenants are covenants that theologians have devised in order to explain what they think is in the

Bible. Now, there is nothing at all wrong with the idea of a theological covenant. After all, what we try to do when we study the Bible and then try to explain it is to put in our own words what we see in the teaching of Scripture, and if it is helpful for us to use some term which perhaps the Scriptures have not used, but which helps us to understand what the Scriptures say that is perfectly all right. We have used terms like Trinity, for example, to say what the Bible teaches even though the term is not found in the Bible. We have used terms like old nature and new nature in order to express what we see in the Scriptures, even though those particular terms are not found in the Scriptures. So there is nothing wrong with that in itself. The theological covenants are attempts by theologians to explain what they have seen in the Bible.

Covenant theologians -- they are usually thought to be responsible for the theological covenants -- have generally seen three covenants as basic to their system: the covenant of redemption -- an eternal covenant between the persons of the Godhead by which each person, Father, Son, and Spirit undertakes to carry out a certain task in order that the total program, the total redemptive program of God, might be fulfilled. And so the Father initiates, the Son executes, and the Spirit administers the benefits of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I personally feel that the covenant of redemption is taught in Scripture. It is referred to under other terms in passages such as Titus chapter 1 verse 2 in which we have references to the promise of life which was made in ages past. It is referred to in John chapter 6 verses 38 and 39 when the Lord Jesus speaks of the commission that he has received from the Father and which he carries out. It is referred to in passages like Luke chapter 22 verse 22 and verse 29, in the latter text of which there is found the word, covenant, in the Greek text.

Theologians also have spoken of a covenant of works. Now, the Covenant of Work was the covenant that God made with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that is what we studied last time under the term The Edenic Covenant. That covenant was a

conditional covenant. An arrangement was made between God and Adam which involved certain responsibility on the part of Adam and certain responsibility on the part of God. Adam broke that covenant by virtue of his disobedience in the Garden of Eden, and consequently, the Covenant of Works was broken.

Theologians also have spoken of a Covenant of Grace, the Covenant of Grace being necessary because of the breaking of the covenant of works. The Covenant of Grace is supposed to be a covenant made between God and all of the elect, and this Covenant of Grace made between God and the elect is God’s gracious guarantee that the provisions which Jesus Christ has accomplished, by which we have eternal life might become the possession of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, in the Covenant of Grace, it is also guaranteed by God that all of the elect shall come to faith. That is the part of the Holy Spirit to accomplish in the covenant.

Now it is my own personal opinion that this Covenant of Grace is not really a scriptural teaching. I do think that the ideas back of the Covenant of Grace are set forth in Scripture, but not as a kind of covenant which we could call a Covenant of Grace, and so for myself I do not accept the validity of the term, Covenant of Grace, but I do accept the covenant of redemption and the covenant of works which we have called the Edenic Covenant.

We come to the passage in which we have the first mention specifically of the term, covenant in the Bible. In chapter 6 and verse 18 of the Book of Genesis we read, “But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee.” In Genesis chapter 6 and verse 18 we have the first mention of the word covenant in the Bible. So it has some special significance for us since it is the first mention of the term, covenant. It is used in connection with Noah.

Noah we read in the New Testament is the connecting link between the world that then was, which being overflowed with water perished, and the earth which now is, of

which we are a part, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. So Noah is a very, very important biblical character, since it is he who is the connection between the world that was destroyed by the flood and the world of which we are part now. No covenant was instituted in the interval between Adam and Noah, although there were divine promises such as the promise of redemption in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15, promises with reference to Cain and Abel in chapter 4, and other types of promises. But no covenant was instituted between the covenant in Eden and the covenant that God made with Noah so far as Scripture is concerned.

Now if you have a Scofield Reference Bible you will note, of course, that Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 is called the Adamic Covenant by Mr. Scofield. For example, on page seven of my edition of the King James version, note two under chapter 3 verse 15 we read, “The Adamic condition, the Adamic Covenant conditions the life of fallen man. Conditions which remain till in the kingdom age the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The elements of the covenant are—“

Now if you will read through these carefully in the light of the things that I said about what makes up a covenant, I think you will agree with me that Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 does not represent a covenant at all. It is of course a divine promise and a very important promise, because it is the basic promise of the coming of the Redeemer, but I do not myself see that particular statement as a reference to an Adamic Covenant, and so as far as I am concerned, I respect Mr. Scofield’s opinion I just do not follow it at that point.

Now we want to study the Noahic Covenant and Eschatology, and so we are coming to Roman one: The Historical Background of the Noahic Covenant. I want you now to turn with me to chapter 9, and I want you if you will, to listen as I read the account of the establishment of the Noahic Covenant, chapter 9 verse 8 through verse 17 of the Book of Genesis. Moses writes:

“And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, (that’s rather interesting because up to this point almost entirely it has been God dealing with Noah directly and with the sons and his family indirectly, but here) And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you, shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, 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 the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

The background of the Noahic Covenant is that of the sin and judgment of the flood. If you turn back to chapter 6 and read with me verses 5 through 7 as well as 11 through 13, you discover that as the progress of human history developed, man after the Fall in the Garden of Eden progressed and deepened in his sin and inequity, and finally Moses writes in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter and the 5<sup>th</sup> verse of the Book of Genesis,

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

We learn from other portions of the Bible that this was not something that went on without divine comment, for in the days of the development of evil there were men who preached the Scriptures. We read in the book of Jude verses 14 and 15 that Jude was a preacher who particularly spoke of the ungodliness of the men of his day and warned them of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus and that he would come and he would execute judgment upon the ungodly men. That is set forth for us in Jude chapter Jude verses 14 and 15. It is also stated in Scripture, 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and so as the wickedness developed and deepened in the pre-flood civilization, God had his men who spoke for him and warned the generations of the judgment that was sure to come, but their preaching like the preaching of many who preached the word of God, was ineffective, and as a result of it, the

wickedness only continued to deepen and finally it was made necessary that God bring the flood upon the earth.

As the writer of the Ecclesiastes says, who was also a preacher, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil,” and so they preached and they warned and they admonished, but in spite of the preaching, in spite of the warning, in spite of the admonishing the wickedness developed and deepened and finally God must bring judgment upon the earth.

The man who is the key man in the bringing of the judgment up of the flood upon the earth is Noah, the captain of the ark. He was one man who was in step with God and it must have been a strange feeling for Noah to realize that it was he almost alone among the antediluvians who walked with God. We read in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter, “These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” There is a great deal of stress upon the way in which that statement is made in the last part of that 9<sup>th</sup> verse. It’s even more emphatic than it was than is the statement with reference to Enoch. It is of course said that Enoch walked with God. But in the case of Noah the language is even more emphatic, and it is especially singled out that it is with God that Noah with walked. He was one man in step with God, but we must remember that no man ever walks with God who is not in that walk the product of the grace of God.

Now in my prayer I made reference to the fact that all the children of God are taught by God. That is the one characteristic of all the saints of God. They are taught by God. No one ever comes into faith to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is not taught by God. It is said in the Book of Isaiah, with reference to the remnant of the future in Israel who shall enjoy the Messianic blessings of the Second Advent in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, that they are taught of God and the Lord Jesus takes that phrase out and uses it in

his ministry in his day saying that all the children of God are taught by him. It is only by his teaching that we come to the knowledge of him.

And so in the case of Noah of whom it is said that he is a just man perfect in his generations and that he walked with God, we must not for one moment think that the source of Noah’s spiritual life is Noah. That is not true. That is seen in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse. And Noah found grace with God. It is because Noah found grace with God that he walked with God. It is because he was taught by God that he comes to know God, and my Christian friend in the audience here tonight, if you are walking with God at all or if you have any understanding of God at all, it is because you too have been taught by God. All the children of God are taught by God. Well Noah is singled out to be the captain of the ark. It is with Noah that God deals. And we read next of the commissioning of the ark.

Now whenever we come to think about the ark -- this is such a strange story, the ark -- that all kinds of interesting little stories have arisen about the flood. It has been said that there was only one good man among the descendants of Adam and Eve and that man was Noah. And so God commanded this old man to build an ark and bring aboard two of every sort of living creature, seven of the sacrificial animals, so that they would survive the flood of waters upon the ark.

Now this simple little account is the occasion of a flurry of questions from Sunday school pupils. You’ve probably heard some of them yourself. Why didn’t the lions and tigers eat Noah up on that boat? How come the dogs and cats didn’t fight on the ark? During the flood why didn’t the people just float around on inner tubes? Why didn’t Noah make a spaceship instead of a boat? One boy coming home from Sunday school with his buddy after he had been told the story of the ark said to his friend, Do you suppose Noah did a lot of fishing? The other one said, How could he with only two worms? [Laughter] Which may represent the judgment of God upon fishermen, but I can just imagine some fisherman in that boat with only two worms -- that would be total frustration for some of my friends, I know and some who are usually present in this

auditorium, but who may not even be here for the same reason that these boys were talking about.

What seems to impress kids the most about Noah is the ripeness of his years. One teacher was reading the passage that says and Noah lived to be 950 years old, and he died. And a boy is reported to have quickly spoken up, Would you believe three hundred? Trying to make the point that Noah was had found great favor in God’s sight a teacher asked, Why do you think Noah was able to live so long? One boy replied, He probably watched his diet. [Laughter] Reminds me of the story of, this is a true account of a man who a few years ago reached the age of ninety-two, and someone asked him what he thought about it. He said, well if he had known he was going to live that long, he’d have been a little more careful about what he ate.

Now the question that always comes to me when I think about the ark is, Why didn’t Noah swat those two flies when he had a chance? That seems to me to make more sense than all of these other comments. [Sustained laughter]

Now the commissioning of the ark is described in Genesis chapter 6 verses 13 through 22. Now notice that the first mention of the covenant in verse 18 is made in the context of salvation. The one bright ray of hope that guided Noah and his family in the ark -- the eight souls, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives -- was the thought of the covenant. So all through the process of the judgment, the thing that encouraged them, the thing that buoyed them up for what lay before them was the fact that God had said in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse, “With thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.”

Now the cataclysm is described for us in chapter 7 verse 1 through chapter 8 and verse 14, and I don’t want to speak in detail about this by the way that should be 7:1 through 8:14 rather than 8:4. The warnings being flouted, the judgment comes but it is only partial for both the land and the people. Complete death and rebirth alone really meets our situation, but all of this is typical. And after the judgment of the flood in verses

15 through 19, Moses describes the new commission that God gave unto Noah. We read in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse, “And God spoke unto Noah saying (you’ll notice that God still deals with Noah) Noah, go forth from the ark thou and thy wife and thy sons and thy sons’ wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh both of fowl and of cattle and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth that they may breed abundantly in the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.” The 18<sup>th</sup> verse the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, “And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.” As almost a second Adam, Noah steps into a world that has been cleansed by judgment. This event, of course, is a typical event. The flood is typical of judgment and that we are taught in the New Testament in passages such as 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 5 through verse 13 and 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 20. It is also typical of salvation, and we are taught that in 1 Peter chapter 3. And it is also illustrative of the New Testament rite of baptism, and that, too, is spoken of in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 21.

I want you to turn over with me to 1 Peter chapter 3, because I think that at least you will be able to see that this is a typical event, and we could expound it in more detail, in its typical significance, but we don’t have time to do it in our theological study. 1 Peter chapter 3 and let me read beginning at verse 18. 1 Peter 3 15:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit: By whom also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Who at one time were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which few, that is, eight souls were saved through water.”

So you can see that here we have a picture of salvation in the salvation of the souls upon the ark. Judgment came, but being in the ark, they were preserved through judgment. A beautiful picture of how those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and who are united with him who is our ark are preserved from ultimate divine judgment.

Now Peter continues verse 21,

“The like figure unto which even baptism doth also now save us.”

Now when he says the like figure he means that baptism is an illustration of the salvation that we possess, so that when we undergo water baptism we are going through an experience that illustrates our salvation so that the flood and the judgment of the ark is typical of judgment, it is typical of salvation, it is also illustrative of the New Testament rite of baptism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> verse Noah, Moses writes of Noah and the new worship -- I want to read these verses too chapter 8 verse 20.

“And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; (you’ll notice that we have here indication of the fact that there is such a thing as the doctrine of original sin in the Mosaic records; man’s heart is evil from his youth;) neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

The mercy which God has shown to Noah leads to worship, and Noah, when he comes out of the ark, as his first activity builds an altar unto the Lord. This is suggestive of many things to us. It suggests the fact that Noah recognizes that the life that he possesses is a life that should have been forfeited in judgment, and in the fact that he brings an animal and offers the sacrifice, he testifies to the fact that he deserves death, but that by virtue of God’s provision through sacrifice he now stands in this cleansed environment, set free, brought through the judgment of God and made free in the grace of God. This accepted sacrifice which Noah brings in chapter 8 is the basis of the covenant that follows in chapter 9.

So in a sense we could say that what we are being taught here is the cancellation of judgment over the face of the earth by means of a flood, forever, is the result of the offering of the animal sacrifice which points of course to an ultimate sacrifice to be made by the Lord Jesus Christ. The accepted sacrifice then is the basis of the following thwarted judgment, and points to the fact that the basis of blessing upon Noah through the Noahic Covenant is the everlasting covenant consummated in eternity, inaugurated by the coming of the Redeemer in blood upon Calvary’s cross.

You can see that all of this, then, is the unfolding of the program of God that he the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have devised in eternity and Noah, Adam, the antediluvians, the post-diluvians are to be taught very carefully the fact that approach to God is by virtue of sacrifice by virtue of the shedding of blood by virtue of faith by virtue of the grace of God.

Now of course the reason by which or according to which Noah may bring an offering and find acceptance to God is because his offering points forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the result of the eternal covenant made between the Father, Son and Spirit. So all of this is welded together in a beautiful unfolding of the steps of the Messianic the unfolding of the Messianic grace of God.

You can imagine that when Noah came out of that ark that he was possessed with a great deal of melancholia. He had been used to an earthly scene which was characterized by paradise. He had known of the existence of the tree of life. He was prevented from going, but he knew of that which prevented him from going. He was acquainted with a kind of situation that reflected the original situation that existed between God and the first man, but now after the year of judgment, he comes to this cleansed earth as a result of judgment and everything seems to be different.

I’m sure that there was a great deal of melancholia on the part of Noah and his family, but he was sustained by the promise of the covenant that God had made had promised to make with him. In the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter we read of some new decrees, and again I want to skip by these with just a few comments, because we want to deal in a moment with the Noahic Covenant that is made with him.

Again, by the way, I think that Mr. Scofield has missed some of the point of these chapters. On the right side of the page, page 15, he makes reference to the Noahic Covenant, and he says near the top of his note half-way down the page, a little past half-way down the page, “The elements of the covenant are” and he lists a number of things that are referred to here in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter but who really but which really do not belong to the covenant. For example, the very first thing he mentions Man is made responsible to protect the sanctity of human life by orderly rule over the individual man even to capital punishment.” Now that of course is true, but it is not part of the covenant. The covenant is not made until verse 8. Human government does not belong to the Noahic Covenant, and all you need to do is just to read through those statements and pick out the ones that really pertain to the covenant and the ones that do not pertain.

But we read in chapter 9 verse 1, “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them,” and again, the these decrees that God gives to Noah echo the charge that he gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden. He is told for example to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Well that is very similar to the statement that was made to Adam and to

Eve originally. In the 7<sup>th</sup> verse he says, “And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. Again you find echoes of the relationship that God had with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

But there is one distinctive difference now, and it is the fact that sin has come in and the scene is now darkened by the existence of human sin, and you can see evidences of it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse: “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 moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.” So while we have echoes of the charge that God gave to Adam, in the charges that he makes and gives to Noah we find this very distinctive difference that sin has now come into the earthly scene and the purging in the judgment of the flood has not remedied the condition of the human heart, and so Adam has brought so Noah has brought his sinful heart from the antediluvian age into the postdiluvian age, and the same condition exists in the heart of man that existed before.

We find other evidences of it here in reflections upon the fact the violence will ensue. “Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; even as the green herb I have given you all things.” And so Noah is now expected to slay the animals in order to feed himself. We have reference to penal judgment in verses 5 and 6: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” And so here we have instituted human government. Man is given the power of the sword as Paul expounds it in Romans 13. He speaks of the magistrates who bear the sword and the sword is placed in the hands of man and man is expected to exercise government upon the earth. By the way in this 9<sup>th</sup> chapter in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse where we read, And God blessed Noah, that’s the first instance of blessing since the fall.

Now I do want to say just one word about the blood here. What is certainly a fresh development is the law of the blood which is theologically far reaching. It is at once limited, it at once limited man’s rights over God’s creatures since their life was his. Notice the 4<sup>th</sup> verse. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. In other words, the life belongs to God. The Mosaic law reaffirmed this, repeatedly, that the life belongs to God, and the blood represents the life so the blood belongs to God. It also prepared men to appreciate the use of blood and sacrifice, because blood belongs to God, since life belongs to God, it would be seen as his atoning gift to sinners and not theirs to him. And so when blood is offered upon the sacrifice, upon the altar, the sacrificial altar, it was implicit that this blood is that which belongs to God, the life that belongs to God really, and it is offered for men. So that there would be no idea of man offering something of himself to God, but rather something of God is offered to God.

Now in the Bible, blood refers to violent death. It does not refer simply to death. When we read in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus shed his blood for our sins, we are to understand by that not simply that our Lord Jesus died. Our Lord Jesus would not have atoned for our sins if he had died of a heart attack. There are many ways by which we may die, but when we are, when the Lord Jesus is said to give his blood for us the reference is to violent death, and that is an essential feature of the death of the Lord Jesus. And you will find this implied right here. Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And so implicit in all of this and this new law concerning the blood is that blood belongs to God. The shedding of blood is a reference to violent death. It demands judgment, and human government is put into man’s hands in order to execute divine government upon the earth as mediators for him.

Now we come to the covenant, the theological significance of the Noahic Covenant. I’m not going to say anything for the sake of time about the fact that Noah

illustrates the work of faith. We want to concentrate on this first explicit covenant, and I want to try to bring out several things about it that are of the greatest importance.

First, the covenant is divinely originated. Now in chapter 6 and verse 18 we read, “But with thee will I establish my covenant.” Now notice the words. But with, thee will I establish my covenant. Chapter 9 verse 9. Here a great deal of stress rests upon the fact that it is God who establishes the covenant. Chapter 9 verse 9. “And behold, I” – it’s as if he wishes to stress the fact that he is the inaugurator of the covenant – I – “And behold I establish my covenant with you.” Verse 11, “And I will establish my covenant. Verse 12, “This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you.” Verse 13, “I do set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and the earth.” Verse 17, “And God said unto Noah this is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

So, the Noahic Covenant just as we shall see in the case of the Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant that is conceived by God, it is devised by God, it is determined by God, it is established by God, it is confirmed by God, and it is dispensed by God himself. So, it is a divinely originated covenant. All of the essential redemptive blessings which God has for men are essential redemptive blessings that are traceable to him. Never forget that.

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “God who at sundry times and in diverse manner spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” The initiative is always with God. It is not that we said, O God speak to us. No one wishes God to speak to them. This is the experience of every one of us. We do not want God to speak to us naturally. So the stress rests in the Bible upon the fact that it is God who initiates the speech with men.

Second, the covenant is universal in scope. Now we read then in verses 9 and 10, “I will establish it with you with your seed after you and with every living creature that is with you.” In a little while he will say it is made with all flesh.

Now the token of the covenant is the bow the rainbow. Like the rainbow which embraces the circle of vision, its benefits, the benefits of this Noahic Covenant, touch all. It is made with all flesh. And by the way, it is made with all flesh apart from intelligent understanding of its meaning, too. It is not said, I make this covenant with all flesh who understand the significance of the covenant. It is made with all men whether they understand it or not. Now that’s a rather startling thing, but if you read through this you will see that that is precisely what is stated in the text. The blessing then is a blessing that flows from God’s common grace, the grace that he exercises towards all men, and it provides the background for the fulfillment of the soteriological promises of the Bible, for there could be no fulfillment of the soteriological promises of the Bible if we were not assured that we would have an earth upon which these promises might be played out. And so in the Noahic Covenant the blessings of common grace include an earth that will never again be destroyed by a flood so that we may have the outworking of the redemptive promises. This is part of God’s common grace, and that is why it is for everybody.

Third, the covenant is unconditional. Now of course you expect it to be unconditional when you read that it is divinely originated. Of course it could be divinely originated and not unconditional. But the two naturally go together. It is an unconditional covenant. Let me give you one theological word. When we use the term, synergism, S-Y-N-E-R-G-I-S-M -- spell that out case there’s an elder present [laughter] -- synergism is the working of things together. If, for example, I were to say concerning Roman Catholicism, Roman Catholicism gives us a synergistic salvation, I would be saying Roman Catholicism presents us a system of salvation in which men must do something and God must do something. Synergism. All religions except Christianity are synergistic. That is they present a plan of salvation by which men do something and God does something. God provides salvation; man gains it by works, for example. God provides a

salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice. Man obtains it by undergoing the rite of baptism. This is synergistic.

Now of course, synergistic has as its opposite, monergism. *Monos* meaning alone. So that when we say something is monergistic, we’re talking about true Christianity. That is, Christianity tells us that through Jesus Christ’s saving work God offers a salvation to all men which is their’s upon the basis of grace, and we do not do anything in order to receive that salvation, so Christianity is a monergistic system of truth. It is the only monergistic system.

Now of course, I could have avoided all of this by saying as Bible teachers frequently do, All religions and Christianity may be summed up in two words: doing, done. And by doing we express the fact that all religions except Christianity lay upon men the responsibility of doing something, whereas in Christianity we are told that Christ has done something for us which is ours upon the basis of grace. But I wanted to use that big word: monergism. Because sooner or later you are going to run across it.

Now the monergism of the Noahic Covenant is seen in the absence of conditioning commandments. You will find as you read through these verses, and I hope you noticed it as we read through them for our Scripture reading, that there is no indication at all here of any commandment that is laid upon man. Everything proceeds from God. It is unconditional. There is not even a threat of forfeiture of the blessings as a penalty. This is something that God does unconditionally.

Now the seal of the covenant is the rainbow, and that confirms the unconditionality of it. The rainbow rigidly excludes all human cooperation, for the rainbow is something that we, try as we might, cannot produce.

Now in the case we will see later of the Abrahamic Covenant, when the rite of circumcision becomes the means by which the recipients of the Abrahamic blessing are identified, it is within the fallible, deceptive mind of man to twist the blessings of God into the means by which we may obtain his blessings through works. And so it’s not long

before Jewish people have the idea that the way we obtain the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant is by being circumcised, just as is by analogy in Christianity we are given a grace salvation through the Lord Jesus, and we are told in testimony to it, in illustrating what has happened, we should be baptized by water not to obtain it, but because we have obtained it, it’s not long before we have great groups of people who have twisted that which is to be an illustration of what has happened into the means by which we obtain it. So that we can think that we have worked in some way to obtain God’s blessings.

Now the rainbow defies all of that. The rainbow is something which only God can do, and so the seal of the covenant of Noah is a seal which confirms the unconditionality of the covenant. It is God who sees. It is God who remembers, and the performance rests wholly with him.

Fourth. The covenant -- or D in the outline -- the covenant is everlasting. That is stated in verses 12 and 16, and the perpetuity rests upon the monergistic nature of the covenant. It is permanent for the simple reason, that it rests upon God alone, and he carries out his promises.

And finally, the covenant is typical. In verse 13 we read, “I do set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” So God says after the judgment of a storm, as the departing dark clouds are fleeing the scene, and the rays of the sun flash upon those departing storm clouds, and a rainbow appears in the sky, that is a token of the fact that I have remembered my covenant never to again bring a destruction over the whole of the earth by the waters of a flood.

Now this very event is so beautifully typical of the work of the Lord Jesus, that I must comment upon it. For you see, the sun’s rays falling upon the departing dark clouds suggests the thought of judgment dissipated by grace. Noah -- his name by the way means “rest” -- he was the rest-giver. Jesus Christ is the true rest-giver. The bow in the sky suggests the judgment that is departing and the rays of divine mercy that are falling

upon it produce the beauty of the rainbow suggestive of the fact that it is by virtue of the finished work of the Lord Jesus by which he has dissipated the judgment of God upon the sin of sinners, through the grace of God and the result is the beauty and the glory of the work of redemption.

Now three, Roman three: The Eschatological Significance of the Noahic Covenant. This is a generally overlooked feature of the Noahic Covenant, but that’s very understandable because the eschatological features of the Noahic Covenant are not significant. Next week when we begin our study of the Abrahamic Covenant, we will come to a covenant in which the eschatological features are most significant.

Human government is established here, but that’s not really a part of the covenant. That does have reference to the Messianic kingdom, because it is of course in the Messianic kingdom that the Lord Jesus finally and perfectly exercises human government as is set forth in Isaiah chapter 11.

There are two things that I think we may emphasize in our remaining couple of minutes. First the covenant provides for kingdom’s sphere. By that I mean that through the Noahic Covenant we are assured that there is to be an earth upon which the Lord Jesus will come and will rule and reign. In other words, we have through the Noahic promise and the unfolding of the divine plan of redemption assurance that there will be an earth upon which our Lord shall rule. And finally the covenant illustrates God’s faithfulness to Israel’s Messianic promises. And as we conclude, I want you to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 54, and I want you to see the use that the Prophet Isaiah makes of the Noahic Covenant. Isaiah chapter 54. This is the chapter in which looking down into the future, down through the corridors of time, Isaiah writes of Israel’s present dispersion to the four corners of the earth and the fact that God is going to bring them back and give them the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. In the 5<sup>th</sup> verse of Isaiah chapter 54 we read,

“For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.” (Now he’s talking about the future return of Israel and the fulfillment of the Messianic promises to them -- an event that is still future today.) In a little wrath I hid my face from them from thee for a moment; (that’s the present time; God calls it a little time in the light of the future) but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.”

So he is saying in the present time when Israel is dispersed and under judgment, that’s a little time, but there’s going to be an exercise of mercy upon Israel which will be an everlasting exercise of mercy. Then he says in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse,

“For this is like the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD who hath mercy on thee.”

In other words, the Noahic promises are immutable and unalterable and the immutability and unalterability of the Noahic promises -- and we see today this earth has not been destroyed by a flood -- the immutability of those promises is like the immutability of his promises to Israel regarding the Messianic future.

So just as surely as he has fulfilled the covenant of Noah so will he fulfill the Messianic promises made through Abraham and bring Israel into her promised blessing. And of course we are living in days in which these things are evidently, in the relatively near future, to be fulfilled. Our time is up. We must stop. Next week we shall begin the study of the Abrahamic Covenant which is probably one of the most important covenants in the Old Testament and one of the most important subjects in the Old Testament as well. I suggest, if you wish to read ahead that you read Genesis chapter 12 and Genesis chapter 15, Genesis chapter 17. Why don’t you just read Genesis chapter 12 on through about chapter 22, because we will be studying these chapters over the next couple of times together. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are thankful to Thee for the blessings of the covenants which Thou hast consummated with men. We thank Thee for the Noahic Covenant, and we thank Thee that every time we look into the sky and see a rainbow we think of the mercy of God which has exhausted the judgment of God in the blood of Christ, and we think of the blessings that are ours as Thou hast exhausted our judgment in the blood of our blessed Redeemer, whose we are and whom we desire to serve.

In his name. Amen.