



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 9:8-17: The Rainbow as a Sign of God's Covenant

Lesson 21

"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." 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."

Background Notes

The first item of business between God and man after the great Flood of Noah's day was a covenant. This covenant is known as the Noahic covenant, for obvious reasons. Who was this covenant is made with? Verses 8 and 9, *"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."*

Who are Noah's descendants? Everyone -- including you and me! So the stipulations and promises of the Noahic covenant of Genesis 9 are for **all** mankind. Contained in this covenant made by God with man is the biblical authority for human government on this earth. We have already seen that the Noahic covenant gives nations the right to maintain law and order, even to the extent of capital punishment for murder. We have also seen, under the Noahic covenant, that mankind has God's permission to use animals for food.

In Genesis 9 we see that in the Noahic Covenant, God promised He would never again destroy life on this earth with a worldwide flood. God said, *"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"(v15).*

The sign that God gave as confirmation of the Noahic Covenant is the rainbow. *"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"(v12).* Note that "all successive generations" includes you and me today. *"I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for*

the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth”(v13). So the rainbow is the sign of the Noahic Covenant.

God gave confirming signs for a number of the biblical covenants. The sign of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. The sign of the Mosaic covenant was the Sabbath. And the sign of the Noahic covenant was -- and still is -- the rainbow.

Doctrinal Points

1. The rainbow is a guarantee that God cares for His creatures.

In verses 9 and 10 God said, "As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants¹ 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."

Every time you look at a rainbow, don't just admire its beauty! Remember that it is a guarantee that God has given us to remind us that He cares for His creatures, both people and animals. And when you see a double rainbow, don't just exclaim "ooh and ah" -- let that the double rainbow emphasizes to you that God cares for you, and say "God cares for me, God cares for me!" (Humor/laughing) And when people standing around you say, "What is wrong with you anyway?" take that opportunity to share with them what the rainbow is all about! It is a sign of God's covenant with man and a guarantee that God cares for all His creatures.

Do you know what causes a rainbow? (Here we go off on the physics, right?) Do you know what causes a rainbow? It is the dispersion of sunlight shining through raindrops. We look for rainbows when it has just been raining and the sun comes out, right? Well, there were no rainbows before the Flood because there was no rain before the Flood. Genesis 2:6 (before the Flood) says that the ground was watered by "a mist that went up." We believe that there may have been a water vapor canopy surrounding the earth before the Flood. This may have been "the waters above the firmament" that we read about in Genesis 1:7. *"Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so."* On the second day of creation God made an expanse, the firmament, to divide the waters from below the expanse from the waters above. So it's quite likely that there was a water vapor canopy surrounding the earth before the Flood, and very possibly that was one of the sources for all the water of the Flood. In Genesis 7:11 we read that God caused the "fountains of the deep" (subterranean waters) to burst forth, and the "floodgates of heaven" (quite likely the water vapor canopy)) to precipitate in the form of torrential rain..

In any case, rainbows were not possible before the Flood because there was no rain. Now that the water vapor canopy was gone and the Flood was over, rainbows were not only possible, but God chose the rainbow as the sign of His guarantee that He cares for His creatures. 1 Peter 5:7 says, *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* Remember, the rainbow is a guarantee that God cares for His creatures.

2. The rainbow is a guarantee that God keeps His promises.

Verse 15 once again, *"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."* God promised that He would never again send a worldwide flood. Has God kept His promise? The answer is obvious. The rainbow is a guarantee that God keeps His

promises! The Hebrew word used here for "bow" is the same as the Hebrew word used for the "bow of battle." When peace covenants and peace treaties were made in ancient days, they would put away or hang up their battle bows, symbolic of the fact that there was now peace. What an interesting picture -- the warriors would hang up their bows! It has been suggested that this is exactly what is involved in verse 13. God said "*I set my bow in the cloud*" -- that is, I am putting away my battle bow. I am hanging up my bow. I am pledging my peace and I keep my promises. Take a look at verse 16 once again, "*The rainbow shall be in the cloud.*" The Hebrew word is just "bow." "*The bow 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.*" So every time we see a rainbow in the sky, let's remember that it's a guarantee that God keeps His promises. Not just the promise that there will be no more worldwide floods, but **all** of His promises!

God has given us many promises in His Word. Let's just take one from the New Testament. In Hebrews 13:5 we read that Jesus said, "*I will never leave you or forsake you.*" What a promise! Are you lonely this morning? Remember Jesus said, "*I will never leave you or forsake you.*" Others may leave you and forsake you, but not our Lord Jesus. Employers may forsake you. Friends may leave you. Even your children or your spouse may leave you or forsake you. But if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you can be sure that He will **never** leave you or forsake you. Our Lord Jesus has promised, God has promised, that He will never leave us or forsake us. Remember that truth the next time you see a rainbow. The rainbow is a guarantee that God keeps His promises.

Practical Application:

There's more than a pot of gold for us at the end of the rainbow!

We've all heard the legend that there's a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow, right? When you heard that myth for the first time as a child, how many of you thought that there really was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? Now-- how many of you still think there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? (Audience laughter.) Well, let me tell you something -- according to the Bible there is **more** than a pot of gold for us at the end of the rainbow!

Do you believe that? When we're in heaven and we are at the end of earthly rainbows, listen to what we can expect: "*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away*"(Revelation 21:4) Wouldn't you agree that these things are better than a pot of gold? No more tears! No more sorrow! No more crying! No more pain! These things will have passed away -- that's **much** better than a pot of gold. Even better than that, the Lord will be there, and God Himself will wipe away our tears!

In Revelation 4:3 we have a heavenly scene of the throne of God. "*And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*" Notice the rainbow around the throne of God; an eternal symbol to remind us that God keeps His promises! You can have your earthly pots of gold -- how much better to enjoy the presence of God forever! The only thing required for us to enjoy all this eternal blessing is to make sure that we're in the family of God now. I trust that everyone here this morning has received Christ as Savior and is in the family of God. If you are a believer here this morning, you are saved forever -- and remember, there's more than a pot of gold for us at the end of the rainbow!