



CONNECTING THE DOTS: NOAHIC COVENANT

I brought with me a very instructive list, entitled, “Everything I really needed to know I learned from Noah’s Ark...” Here’re the lessons...

Remember we’re all in the same boat.

Two heads are better than one.

If you have to start over, do it with a friend by your side.

The woodpeckers inside are a greater threat than the storm outside.

Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the Ark.

Stay fit. When you’re 600 you may get asked to do something really big.

Don’t listen to critics. Just get on with the job that needs to be done.

For safety’s sake, travel in pairs.

Speed isn’t always an advantage. Snails *and* cheetahs were on the Ark.

Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs - the Titanic by professionals.

No matter the storm, if you’re with God, there’s always a rainbow ahead.

Don’t miss the boat.

Obviously, there’s a lot we can learn from the story of Noah’s Ark... And Noah is the focus of today’s episode in our series, “*Connecting the Dots - Putting the Bible Together.*” We’ve been talking about seven *turning points* in God’s dealings with man - and their accompanying covenants.

Remember **a covenant** is an agreement between two people. It sets out the terms of a relationship... And the Bible is a series of covenants God made with certain men, at certain times, in response to certain events. These covenants govern how God deals with people, even today.

In week one we discussed God’s initial covenant with mankind in the Garden of Eden. **The Edenic Covenant** was the arrangement God made with the man and woman before they took a bite of the forbidden fruit...

Week two focused on the covenant God made after mankind's original sin. **The Adamic Covenant** impacted the man and woman at their core. It threw a wrench in the gears of work and family. Life became more difficult. And this week, we're tackling **The Noahic Covenant...** *Even today, after a rain we're reminded that God's agreement with Noah is still in force!*

In 2007, a technician working for the State of Alaska was performing routine maintenance on a computer hard drive. Mistakenly, he reformatted not only the drive itself, but its back-up. Data disappeared faster than you can say, "Oops!" With one click of the enter-key nine months of entries, as well as 800,000 scanned images, just disappeared. *Gone... poof... Oops!* The only remaining back-ups were 300 boxes of written records. It took over 70 employees working nonstop to re-enter the lost data. One keystroke – a single "Oops" – cost the State of Alaska over \$200,000. *And one sin cost Adam and Eve and their descendants far more...*

The first couple wanted to be *like God*, but *apart from God*. They lusted for autonomy. It wasn't that they didn't like God, or didn't want to be with Him. They just didn't want to be His underling. They wanted to captain their own ship. And when Satan tempted them with the offer – they took the bait. With one bite - a single "Oops" - they lost everything! All of life was effected. Ma Nature went bonkers. God's orderly creation was subjected to randomness. Today, *droughts cause famine*, and *tsunamis wipe out coastlines*, and *snowstorms shut down cities* – all because Adam did an "Oops." Man's relationships with nature - and work - and family - and most importantly, God – was damaged by a costly error.

But that's when God instituted a covenant. This is the reoccurring storyline in the human drama... We sin and rebel against God. But God is relentless. He refuses to give up on mankind, and He speeds to our rescue time and time again - *with a covenant*. God re-establishes terms under which He and man can renew their relationship.

It's interesting, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned and poisoned their descendants, God came with a covenant. He responded with the promise of a Savior. Genesis 3:15 is called the "Protoevangelium" or "First Gospel." God says to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." As we talked about last time, the "Seed of the woman" is a Hebrew idiom for Jesus' virgin birth. Here God predicts that Jesus will ultimately triumph over Satan.

Remember the war that rages between God and Satan... God created the angels to be guardians or servants to man. Though we were created a little lower in stature than the angels, we were destined by God to rise above them in glory. Satan couldn't stand the thought of serving a creature that came from a clump of dirt, so he tried to *stop* creation. When he failed, he tried to *spoil* it by tempting Adam and Eve ... And throughout history Satan continues his assault. He wants to keep humanity in darkness. He carries an "enmity" or a hostility toward mankind. Ultimately, Genesis 3:15 foreshadows the cross. As in any war, blows eventually get exchanged. Satan will inflict Jesus with a *heel bruise* - a minor wound. But in return Jesus will level a crippling blow. He'll crush the Serpent's head. Jesus will get the knock-out. He'll ax the rule of Satan.

But here's what's amazing... God's promise of a Savior arrives on the eve of Satan's first victory. The tempter deceives Eve and leads Adam astray - and God takes it in stride. *He's not pleased, but He doesn't panic*. There's no hand-wringing or nervous pacing in heaven. God is always *in the know* and *in control*. He has a covenant for just this sort of situation. Genesis 3 even concedes this won't be Satan's last hoorah. Before his crushing comes, he'll inflict some minor injuries. He'll bruise a heel or two.

Here's the point, God expected *the fall of man*, and *the suffering of Jesus*, and *the damage done by sin and Satan*. Revelation 13:8 proves as much. It calls Jesus **"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."** **Your sin** - and *what's more*, even **your salvation** - was known to God before the first people were created. Like a parent teaching a baby to walk, God knew there would be some spills... Falls are part of the process. *Here's where I'm going...* Apparently, God's master-plan assumes sin will invade His perfect world and contaminate His creation. God wanted us to experience a world gone haywire. He's never responsible for our sin, but He's taken advantage of it, and He's using it to accomplish His purposes.

God's intention was never to simply restore to man what sin had lost. Sitting naked under a tree, munching fruit, was never our ultimate destiny. *God's goal was not to recreate man's innocence in the garden.* In God's estimation **a redeemed man** is superior to **an innocent man**. An innocent Adam had no knowledge of sin, but neither did he know the joy of God's forgiveness, and reconciliation, and righteousness. He was a blank slate... *not a negative, but neither was he a positive.* Morally and spiritually Adam was zero. But God's goal isn't to spend eternity with zeros.

Here's today's big idea: **we gain more in Christ than we lose in Adam.** In Christ we have a new nature. Jesus calls us *"friends."* We're clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We're God's children. His beloved. Heirs to His glory... *None of this was ascribed to a innocent Adam.* Realize a right standing with God in Christ Jesus is greater than the innocence of Adam. *The salvation of Christ* is superior to *the perfection of Adam.*

Here's what I think – I think God prefers hanging out with people *who've tasted of His grace*, over folks *who've known nothing but innocence*. I'm not excusing our sin, or trying to turn evil into good... But our struggle with sin and the joy that comes from Christ's salvation creates a gratitude and humility that pleases God. It seems that *love for God* and *praise to God* is purer when it flows from a redeemed heart.

Sadly, one of the chief traits of human beings is our tendency toward boredom. Anything – no matter how good – loses its luster over time. We don't know how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before they tired of God's menu. But boredom and curiosity led to a massive **"Oops."** *Now imagine a perfect heaven...* How long would it take for you to get bored if you had no comparisons? Could it be the *temporary pain* we're experiencing in this marred world, is *necessary preparation* for the eternity God has in store. Trust me, we'll appreciate God's government far more having experienced what happens when man is in charge. God knew a brief time under fallen conditions would maximize our eternal enjoyment.

Here's how we could say it, **our fallen world is not the best possible world to live in** – *not hardly.* It's full of *heartache* and *headache* and *heartbreak*. Through Christ, God will one day redeem - *or win back* - this world from sin's curse. But God in His wisdom sees this fallen world as **the best possible way to the best possible world.** Living in a sin-scarred world is preparing us for glory. In God's estimation a world that's known sin and its consequences - and yet has been redeemed from it - is better than a world of innocence. This is why from the outset God made a covenant with Adam and Eve – a promise to redeem us. The **"seed of the woman"** would be our Savior.

That's why when Eve births the first child born to human parents, she names him "Cain." It means "*I have him.*" She's quoted in Genesis 4:1, "*I have acquired a man from the LORD.*" One translation reads, "*I have gotten a man, even Jehovah.*" Eve assumes *her son* is *God's Savior*. And this is understandable. She's living outside the garden now. She's just experienced the *labor pains* God warned her about. She's longing to be redeemed from *the pain all round her*. She hopes Cain is the answer.

Here's an old riddle... "*What were Adam and Eve doing after God expelled them from the Garden?*" The answer: "*They were raising Cain...*" That was all it took to shatter Eve's illusion. As soon as she got her baby home from the hospital, she realized like all babies, he was self-willed. Cain threw temper tantrums – told lies – got jealous - pouted. Cain was born as self-centered as Adam and Eve had become. Cain wasn't a Savior. He was a brat. *Cain was a pain*. And slowly, Eve became *painfully aware* of the implications of her sin - not only for her and Adam - but for the whole human race. She ends up naming her second son, "*Abel*" - which means "*vanity.*" It doesn't take long for Eve to despair.

When Adam and Eve first sinned they tried to cover their shame with fig leaves. This is our first inclination when we sin. "*I'll turn over a new leaf.*" We rely on self-improvement, and trust in our own efforts to cover our sin. But God swapped their fig leaves with animal skins. He insisted on a sacrifice. And apparently, God taught that lesson to Adam and his family. Thus, when the brothers came to worship they knew the wages of sin was death. God's covenant required a blood offering. Abel acknowledged his need by coming with a lamb from his flock. He came on God's terms.

But Cain was a farmer. He was proud of his accomplishments. He offered the fruits of his harvest. *Yet his horn or plenty proved not enough.* God *accepted Abel's sacrifice* and *rejected Cain's self-righteousness*. This is still the terms of God's covenant with man. "*Do it yourself*" might work with home improvements, but it won't make a person right with God. We have to humble ourselves and bring a lamb. All our good intentions never equal faith in Jesus. Victory occurs when we trust the Lamb of God.

Rather than humble himself, and trust in another, Cain's pride turned to anger, and he murdered Abel. Cain ended up a *murderer*, not a *Savior*. Imagine the regret Eve felt over Cain's crime and her family's loss! *What had she done?* Her *Oops* in the garden had proved costly indeed. And from the first family the story of mankind goes from bad to worse...

The early chapters of Genesis depict Adam's immediate descendants as *technologically advanced* - but *morally corrupt* and *spiritually deviant*. The Antediluvian World – or the world before the deluge - boasted against God. They lived in open immorality and worshipped the occult. Apparently the Antediluvians crossed boundaries God never intended. They sold themselves completely to sin and Satan. Their depth of sin became irreparable. Genesis 6:6 tells us, "*the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*" Notice, God "*grieved.*" *Grief* is a love word. You can be "*angry*" or "*disappointed*" without loving someone. But you only *grieve* when love gets frustrated.

God loved mankind, and to preserve the human race, He wiped out the Antediluvian corruption, and started over with one man and his family... *Enter Noah...* As we said, "*Everything I really needed to know I learned from Noah...*" Well, the biggest lesson to glean is found in Genesis 6:8...

While the world was going to hell in a hand basket, we're told, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." He found *grace!* He didn't try Cain's approach, and come to God on his own merit. He relied on God's mercies. Because of Noah's faith, God chose to enter into a covenant with him.

God told Noah to build a boat of gopher wood - prepare for at least two of every animal species – *stock up on Dramamine – get a tin can for the termites – hold off on a fly-swatter...* Well, I doubt he had any Dramamine. But Noah and his family were obedient. When the day came they entered the Ark – *and guess who shut the door?* Genesis 7:16 tells us, "the LORD shut him in." Again, God was in charge. He sealed the door up tight.

Then it rained... and rained... and rained... for 40 days and 40 nights. Technically, underground aquifers spewed water upwards – while a collapsing bank of clouds caused water to fall downwards. It was a deluge. And it didn't matter how talented a swimmer you were, or how hard you trained. Every Olympian drowned. If Michael Phelps had been in the water he would've gone under as well. The only people to survive the floodwaters were those who trusted in God's salvation and got onboard with His plan. This is what covenants are all about – getting onboard with God.

When Noah exited the Ark he stepped out into a very different world. 2 Peter 3:6 comments, "the world that then existed perished..." Before the flood the topography was flat, the climate was mild, the conditions were safe... But when man walked out of the Ark, he was now facing a rugged terrain, and brutal weather, and dangerous predators.

Scientists and Bible scholars alike believe that before the flood the Earth was shrouded in a vapor canopy that created a greenhouse effect. A tropical climate and lush vegetation covered the globe... This cloud-cover may've filtered out harmful solar rays that accelerates the aging process. This is why the early chapters in Genesis speak of people living 900 years. After the flood, lifespans drop to current ages. Certainly, when Noah stepped off the Ark he walked out into a very different place that he had known before. *He faced a brave new world!*

And 8:20 records Noah's first act on dry ground. "Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings." People assume two of each animal boarded the Ark. But Noah actually took seven each of the animals used as sacrifices. He knew that God's covenant with man always requires a sacrifice.

And I'm sure God's response to his sacrifice was a welcome relief... God promised to never again "destroy every living thing as I have done." Mankind's heart was still wicked. From time to time and place to place, judgment would be needed. But it would never again be a global flood.

Finally, in Genesis 9:1 we get to our text. God makes a covenant with Noah, especially suited for a post-flood world. "So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Noah had "my three sons" and their wives. And it's now up to these eight to repopulate the planet. *Talk about pressure!* Of course, I know how this went down... *The men got real excited... The wives weren't so sure...* It's interesting, take the population trends over the last century, and extrapolate them back 4,500 years – you end up with a world population of eight people... Your great-grandpa was either *Shem, Ham, or Japheth.*

Verse 2, “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.” This is a strategic covenant. Especially when it comes to the food we’ll eat at Super Bowl parties. God sanctions the enjoyment of *bacon, burgers, steak, shrimp, chicken wings, bratwurst, sausage pizza...* Prior to the flood humans were vegetarians, but afterwards God adds meat to man’s diet. Realize there’s nothing *Christian* about *vegetarian*. The God of the Bible blesses us with Big Macs, and barbecue pork. Evidently, post-flood conditions require an extra source of protein.

And now that animals become a food source for man, God instills within the animal kingdom a fear of humans. Verse 2 calls it a “*fear*” or “*dread*.” This was God’s way of evening up the score - protecting the animals. Imagine a hunter coaxing little Bambi out of the woods with a few sugar cubes, then opening fire... If God hadn’t placed hostility between animals and humans it would’ve been an unfair advantage for meat-eating men.

Of course, Noah looked at this as an unfair advantage for the animals. This created a radical new world for Noah and sons. Onboard the Ark the gators and grizzlies ate out of their hand. From now on they’ll need to keep their hand away from the jaws of such animals. Overnight Noah’s furry friends turn into natural predators. Man is forced to hunt or be hunted. It was a scary new world for Noah. After the flood every time a bush rustled he wondered if he was being stalked. Danger loomed everywhere.

Verse 5 anticipates hostility between man and animal, “*Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it and from the hand of man.*” All life comes from God, and is a gift from God. But in contrast to the values of modern culture, *all life is not created equal*. *Man alone is made in God’s image – not plants or animals*. Now I’m not advocating cruelty to either, but the life of a dog, or an old oak tree, isn’t on the same level as human life. If I cut down an oak tree for firewood to warm my family - my family overrides the life of the oak tree. If a dog bites a man the dog needs to be put down. Whereas if a man shoots a dog for no reason, you can fine him, but you don’t put him down. According to God’s covenant with Noah human life is superior.

God continues, “*From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*” Notice God’s rationale for the death penalty. It’s not deterrence... People track whether it deters murderers and serial killers... *It does deter the guy who gets the needle*. But deterrence is a mute point. The motive behind the death penalty isn’t to cut crime - but to glorify God. Humans are made in God’s image, thus murder is an attack on God. That’s the reason it’s deserving of death.

The Noahic Covenant mandates capital punishment, and by inference institutes the idea of human government to carry it out. Up until Noah there was no such thing as human government. Here God establishes the police. Later, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His followers to turn the other cheek, but He’s speaking of personal interaction. His instructions to believers don’t alter the responsibility God gives to human government. God invented three institutions – *marriage, church, and government*.

God goes on in the next few verses to clarify that His covenant with Noah isn’t just with Noah, but with his descendants and all living creatures. He’ll never destroy the Earth with water again. *He even offers a sign..*

In verse 13 God tells us, “I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” Of course, a rainbow is an optical phenomenon where droplets of water refract the light, and create a prism effect. The water reveals the colors of the spectrum. There were probably rainbows before the flood – perhaps in the garden mist. But since the flood was the first time it had actually rained on Earth, no human prior to Noah, had ever seen a rainbow hanging in the clouds.

And understand what God is saying with the rainbow. He’s literally, hanging up His bow where everyone can see. The Hebrew word translated “rainbow” refers to a “bow and arrow” – an instrument of war. When God hung up His bow He was hanging up His intent to destroy mankind. Here’s the gist of **the Noachic Covenant**... After the flood every time Noah felt a few droplets of rain on his shoulder – or heard a thunderclap in the distance - *it was a crisis of faith*. Each time he heard noises in the dark, or the bushes rustle, or an animal howl - the question he faced was this... *Would he trust God in a fallen world - and still depend on God’s grace?* Or would he succumb to his fears and doubt God’s grace toward Him? God promises grace! *He hung up His bow as proof*. God’s agenda from now to the end of the age is *salvation not condemnation*. *But do we trust Him?* Do we have faith enough to enter a covenant relationship with God?

In Genesis 9:1, God told Noah’s descendants to multiply and scatter (or “fill the earth”), but that wasn’t their first impulse. Again the people disobeyed God. Rather than *spread out* they *huddled up* for protection. The Earth was no longer a safe place. It was now foreign and frightening. The various tribes gathered in Iraq – in the plain of Shinar. They join together as one people, under one government, with one ruler named “Nimrod.” The name means “to rebel.” And that’s what he did... Nimrod led a revolt against God. The Lord had hung up His bow, and sought peace with man, but Nimrod became “the mighty hunter before the Lord.” One interpretation reads, “a mighty hunger against the Lord.” The idea being Nimrod tried to draw people away from God, and after himself.

Tradition says Nimrod was a skilled archer. He was known for his bow. God had deliberately *hung up His bow* – but Nimrod *takes up his bow*... Nimrod was a hunter, and had an uncanny way with animals. He was first to domesticate horses. He brought dangerous beasts under his sway. Among men not accustomed to this new threat from the animal kingdom, Nimrod was an impressive person. He played on man’s fears. In the wake of the new threats posed by a post-flood world he manipulated people into following him. People looked to Nimrod for protection. He made appealing promises. Nimrod was hailed as a Savior – the first Antichrist.

And this is still Satan’s strategy. He manipulates us with fear. He plays on our fears, and sabotages our faith. He amplifies the bumps in the night. He convinces us that God can’t be trusted – or that God is out to get us.

Notice what Nimrod does in Genesis 11. He builds a tower to the heavens – not for God’s glory, but to “make a name for himself.” We’re told in verse 3 they used “brick for stone, and asphalt for mortar.” Ancient *asphalt* was a waterproofing material... So here’s what Nimrod does - he constructs a water-proof skyscraper in the middle of the desert.

Now let me ask, *why would anyone build a water-tight tower in an arid place? There’s only one reason... Nimrod didn’t trust God and His rainbow*. Nimrod was resentful. He didn’t believe that a **redeemed man** was better than **innocent man**. He didn’t trust God’s covenant. *He* knew best. He was suspicious of God’s intentions. He doubted God’s mercy. Hey, you know some Nimrods... These folks still take shots at God. Rather than rely on grace, they resent and doubt God’s good intentions.

In essence, Nimrod calls God a liar. *He* will be the Savior who'll deliver humanity from the cruel tyrant who flooded the Earth with water. Nimrod made God out to be the bad guy, and himself out to be the good guy. The Jewish Talmud says Nimrod "wanted to wage war against God."

But Nimrod's war didn't last long. Genesis 11 describes how God came down to Babel and broke up the party. He confused the original language. And the breakdown in communication caused separation. It drove men apart - and scattered the people as God had intended in the first place... And once again God responded with a covenant...

But here's a twist. No longer will God try to reach mankind as a whole. He'll chose a single family and bring about salvation through that family. In Genesis 11 Satan had orchestrate a worldwide *rebellion* by choosing a man, named **Nimrod** – a place, named **Babel** – a means, called **fear**. But now in Genesis 12 God counters with the work of *redemption*. He establishes a fresh covenant. He chooses a man, named **Abraham**; and a place, called **the land of Canaan**; and a means known as **faith**.

In a real sense your Bible is divided into two sections – and I'm not talking OT and NT. A better dividing line is between Genesis 11 and 12. Through Genesis 11 God tries to establish a covenant with the Adams' family – with all mankind. But they rebel... Now from here until the end of your Bible, God will work primarily through one family to redeem the world.

Next week, we'll tackle the granddaddy of all God's Covenants. The covenant from which the rest of them stem... **The Abrahamic Covenant**. But the question today is, will we trust in God's grace and live by faith in a fearful, scary place? God hung up His bow... will you hang up yours?