

# GOD'S COVENANTS

## NOAHIC COVENANT

Let me start with a Top Twelve list - not a Top Ten list. I've gone above and beyond the norm tonight! It's **“The Top 12 lessons learned from Noah's Ark...”**

- 12) Remember we're all in the same boat.
- 11) Two heads are better than one.
- 10) If you have to start over, do it with a friend.
- 9) The woodpeckers inside the Ark are a greater threat than the storm outside.
- 8) Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah was told by God to build the Ark.
- 7) Keep yourself in shape. When you're 600 years old you may get asked to do something really big.
- 6) Don't listen to critics. Just get on with the job.
- 5) For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
- 4) Speed isn't always an advantage. Snails *and* cheetahs were on the Ark.
- 3) The Ark was built by amateurs, whereas the Titanic was built by professionals.
- 2) No matter the storm, if you're with God, there's always a rainbow ahead.
- 1) Don't miss the boat.

Obviously, there's a lot we can learn from the story of Noah's Ark... And the **Noahic Covenant** is the focus of tonight's episode in our series, **“God's Covenants.”**

We're talking about seven *turning points* in God's dealings with man, and their accompanying covenants.

Remember **a covenant** is an agreement between 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 has chosen to deal with people throughout history, even with us today.

We've compared the Bible to a NASCAR race.

The actions occur in the turns. And there are seven transitions in the biblical story where man crashes, and in response God makes a new covenant with mankind.

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 first man and woman before they bit the forbidden fruit.

**Week Two** focused on the covenant God made after Adam and Eve sinned. **The Adamic Covenant** had a profound impact on all of life. 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, whenever it rains, we're reminded that God's agreement with Noah still stands!*

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, 800,000 scanned images just disappeared. *Gone... Poof... Oops!* The only remaining back-ups were 300 boxes of written records.

It took over seventy 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 an autonomous wisdom.

It wasn't that they didn't like God, or didn't want to be with God. They just didn't want to be His subordinate.

They wanted to captain their own ship. *And when Satan tempted them, they took the bait.* With one bite of the forbidden fruit - *an “Oops”* - they lost everything!

All of life was effected. Mother Nature went bonkers. God's orderly creation became subject to randomness.

We're now threatened by arbitrary disasters: *drought causes famine, snowstorms shut down cities, tsunamis wipe out coasts, and viruses threaten our way of life (if not our very lives)* all because of Adam's *“Oops.”*

Man's relationships with nature, work, family, and most importantly God, was damaged by a willful error.

But that's when God instituted a covenant. *And 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 mankind can renew their relationship and fellowship.

It's interesting, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned and poisoned their descendants, God came to them with a covenant. He responded with the promise of a Savior.

Genesis 3:15 is called the "[Protoevangelium](#)" or "[First Gospel](#)." God told 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 discussed last time, the "[Seed of the woman](#)" is a Hebrew idiom for Jesus' virgin birth. Whereas, the "[seed of the Serpent](#)" is ultimately Satan's Antichrist.

Recall the war that rages between God and Satan! God created angels to be guardians or servants to man. Though we're created a little lower in stature than 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 as early as the Bible's second verse he tried to **stop** the creation.

When he failed, he tried to **spoil** it by tempting Adam and Eve... And throughout history Satan continues his assaults. He wants to keep humanity in darkness. He harbors a deep "[enmity](#)" or [a hostility](#) toward mankind.

Ultimately, Genesis 3:15 foreshadows the cross.

As in any war, blows are exchanged. Satan inflicts Jesus with *a heel bruise* - a minor wound in proportion to the crippling blow Jesus levels. He crushes the Serpent's head, or literally "**destroys Satan's authority.**" He delivers the knock-out to Satan and his emissaries.

*But here's what's amazing...* God's promise of a Savior arrives from the outset - on the eve of Satan's first victory. The tempter deceives Eve and leads Adam astray, *and though God is not pleased, neither does He 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 the serpent's crushing comes, he'll inflict some minor injuries. Satan bruises a heel or two.

Here's the point, God expected *the fall of man, the damage done by sin and Satan, even the suffering of Jesus.* Revelation 13:8 proves as much. It calls Jesus "**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

**Your sin** - *and what's more, 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.

Apparently, God's master-plan assumed sin would invade His perfect world and contaminate His creation.

**God wanted** us to experience a world gone haywire!

God is never responsible for our sin, but He takes advantage of it and uses it to accomplish His purposes.

God's intention was never to simply restore to man what sin had lost. Adam and Even sitting naked under a tree, munching fruit, was never our ultimate destiny.

*God's goal was not to recreate the man and woman'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 miracle of reconciliation, and gift of righteousness.*

He was a blank slate... *not a negative, but neither was he a positive.* Morally and spiritually Adam was a zero. And God's goal isn't to spend eternity with zeros.

**Here's tonight's big idea: we gain more in Christ than we lost in Adam!** In 1719 Isaac Watts penned a hymn entitled, **"Jesus Shall Reign Where'er The Sun."**

In his song he writes of Jesus, **"In Him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost."**

**And this is so important...** The goal of our redemption was not to return to Adam's innocence, but to bless us with far more... In Christ we have a new nature. Jesus calls us **"friends."** We're clothed in His righteousness. We're God's children - His beloved. Heirs to His glory... *None of this was ascribed to an innocent Adam.* Realize a right standing with

God in Christ is superior to the innocence of Adam. **Christ's gift of salvation is greater than Adam's perfection.**

Here's what I believe... I think God prefers hanging out with people *who've sinned, yet tasted of His grace*, over people *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 our 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 human traits 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 Eden before they tired of God's menu. But boredom and curiosity led to their massive **"Oops."**

*Now imagine you and I in a perfect heaven... How long do you think it would take for us to get bored if we had no comparisons?* Could it be the *temporary pain* we've experience in this evil world is *necessary preparation* for the eternity God has planned for us.

We'll have a better appreciation for His government, having endured the disaster of 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.** It's full of *heartache*,

*headache, and heartbreak.* Through Christ, God will one day redeem 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 - *yet has been redeemed* - is better than a world of innocence. This is why from the outset God made a redeeming covenant with Adam and Eve.

The "***Seed of the woman***" would be our Savior.

That's why when Eve births the first child born to humans, 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 Yahweh.**" Eve assumed her son was God's promised Savior. *And this was understandable...*

Eve is living outside the garden now. She's just experienced *the labor pains* God warned would come. She's longing to be redeemed *from the far-reaching pain her sin caused.* 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!***"

And 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 selfish and self-willed.



Cain threw temper tantrums, told lies, got jealous, pouted when he didn't get his way. Their son, Cain, was born as self-centered as Adam and Eve became.

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 her husband, 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. *The life that was once rich and full had turned to vanity.*

When Adam and Eve sinned they tried to cover their shame with fig leaves. And this is our first inclination when we sin, "*I'll turn over a new leaf.*" We rely on self-improvement, and trust in our efforts to cover our sin.

But God swapped their fig leaves with animal skins.

**God insisted on a sacrifice.** And apparently, God taught that lesson to Adam, Eve, and they're family.

Thus, when the brothers came to worship they knew the wages of sin was death. God's covenant required a blood offering. Abel was a shepherd and he admitted his need by bringing a lamb. 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 Cain's horn of plenty proved not enough.* God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected Cain's self-effort.

And this is still the terms of God's covenant with mankind. The motto, "Do it yourself," might work with home repairs, but it won't make you right with God. We need to humble ourselves and trust in a sacrifice. God forgives us when we trust in Jesus, His spotless Lamb.

Rather than humble himself, and trust in another, Cain's pride turned to anger, and he murdered Abel.

Eve's son, Cain, ended up a *murderer*, not a *Savior*.

Imagine the regret she felt over her son'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 - that is, the world before the deluge or flood - boasted against God. The people lived in open immorality and worshipped the occult.

Apparently, the Antediluvians crossed boundaries God never intended. They sold out 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." God "*grieved!*" "*Grief*" is a love word. You can be "*angry*" or "*disappointed*" with a person, and not love them. But you only *grieve* over a person you love.

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 I suggested in the beginning, “Everything I really needed to know I learned from Noah...” Well, the biggest lesson we 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.” Noah found *grace!* Rather than follow in Cain’s footsteps, and try to impress God with his own prideful goodness, Noah relied on grace. He had faith in God’s mercy, and God enter into a covenant with Noah.

God told Noah to build a cargo ship of gopher wood, and prepare for at least two of every animal species.

Noah stocked up on Dramamine. Got a tin can for the termites. Held off on a fly-swatter... *Well, I doubt he had any Dramamine,* but Noah and his family obeyed.

When the day came, all eight of them, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, entered the Ark, *and guess who shut the door?* Genesis 7:16 tells us, “the LORD shut him in.” Again, it was God in charge. God sealed the entrance hatch of the Ark up tight.

*Then it rained... and rained... and rained...* for 40 days and 40 nights. *Technically, underground aquifers spewed water upwards – while collapsing cloud banks caused water to fall downwards.* It was a global deluge.

And if you were not onboard the Ark, it didn't matter how talented a swimmer you were, or how hard you trained. Realize, every Olympian drowned in flood.

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 all the covenants are about - *getting onboard with God's plan.*

When Noah exited the Ark he stepped out into a very different world than before the flood. 2 Peter 3:6 comments, *"the world that then existed perished..."*

Before the flood the earth's topography was flat, the climate mild, the conditions safe... But when Noah and his family walked out of the Ark, he was now facing a rugged terrain, brutal weather, and lethal predators.

Many 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 solar radiation that today accelerates the aging process. This is why the early chapters in Genesis records people living 900 years. After the flood, lifespans drop to current ages.

Certainly, when Noah stepped off the Ark he walked out onto a very different planet than he had known before the floodwaters. **He faced a brave new world!**

And Genesis 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 that were fit for sacrifices. He knew that God's covenant with man always requires a sacrifice.

And I'm sure God's response to Noah's sacrifice was a welcome relief to the survivors... God promises at the end of Genesis 8, that despite man's wickedness, to never again "destroy every living thing as I have done."

Mankind's heart was still evil. And from time to time and place to place, local judgments will be needed. But God would never again flood the earth globally!

In Genesis 9:1 God makes a covenant with Noah. He makes promises 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."

Eight people survived the flood - Noah, his wives, his three sons, and their wives. And it was up to those four couples to repopulate the planet. *Talk about pressure!* And I know how this went down... *The men realize **how** to populate, and got real excited. The wives knew the **results** of populating, and weren't quite so sure...*

But take the population trends over the last century, and extrapolate them back 4,500 years, and you end up with a world population of **eight**. Your great-grandpa was Noah's son - either *Shem*, or *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 and far-reaching covenant - even impacting today’s diet. God sanctions the enjoyment of *bacon, burgers, steak, shrimp, wings, bratwurst, sausage pizza, etc.*

Prior to the flood humans were vegetarians, but after the global flood God added meat to mankind’s diet! Realize, there’s nothing Christian about Vegetarianism.

The God of the Bible blesses us with Big Macs, barbecue ribs, and sirloin steak. Evidently, post-flood conditions on earth required a diet with extra protein.

And now that animals become a human food source, God instills within the animal kingdom a fear of men.

This was God’s way of evening the score. He protected animals by placing in them a “*dread*” or *fear* of men. Imagine a deer hunter coaxing little Bambi out of the woods with a sugar cube, then opening fire...

If God hadn’t placed *a dread of man* in the animals it would be an unfair advantage for meat-eating men.

I’m sure at first Noah and his furry friends were happy when the Ark docked and they exited the boat. But the new world they inhabited was radically different. Noah and the animals were no longer pals.

Imagine, onboard the Ark gators and grizzlies ate out of Noah's hand. But from now on, Noah and sons need to keep their hand away from the jaws of such animals.

Overnight, Noah's animal family turns into natural predators. **It's now meat-eaters versus man-eaters.** Human beings are now forced to hunt or be hunted.

And they're not equipped with sword or shotgun.

Suddenly, it's a scary new world for Noah and sons. After the flood, every time a bush rustled he wondered if he was being stalked. Danger loomed everywhere.

Verse 5 anticipates this new hostility, **"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.* Christians believe that human life is of greater value than plant or pet life.

Understand, I'm not advocating cruelty to either plants or animals, but the life of a dog, or that of an aged oak tree, isn't on the same level as a human life.

It's ok for me to cut down an oak tree for firewood to warm my family - my family's need overrides the life of the oak... And it's justified to kill a cow to feed my hungry family... Human life takes priority over animals.

This is why if a dog bites a man the dog gets put down. Whereas, if a man shoots a dog for no reason, he can be fined or jailed, but you don't put him down.

**God's covenant with Noah made human life superior to either plant life or animal life.**

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." Here, God institutes the death penalty. And his rationale is not deterrence...

Sociologists today argue endlessly as to whether the death penalty deters murderers and serial killers... *I'll just say it certainly deters the guy who gets the needle.*

But deterrence is really an irrelevant point.

The motive behind the death penalty isn't to cut crime or save lives - **it's to glorify God.** Humans are made in God's image, thus murder is a direct attack on God. That's the reason it's so deserving of death.

The Noahic Covenant mandates capital punishment, and by inference it institutes the idea of human government to carry it out. Up until Noah's exit from the Ark there was no such thing as human government.

The pre-flood world was governed by the individual's conscience. But here, God assumes an objective authority, *the police or government*, to execute His will.

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 government.

Always remember, God invented three human institutions - **marriage, church**, and **government**.

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

In 9:13 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."** God sets a rainbow in the sky as a sign.

Of course, a rainbow is an optical phenomenon where water droplets refract light, and create a prism effect. The droplets reveal the colors of the spectrum.

I'm sure there were rainbows prior to the flood, *perhaps in the garden mist*. But since the flood was the first time it actually rained on Earth, no human prior to Noah, had ever seen a rainbow hanging in the clouds.

And understand the statement God made with the rainbow. God literally hung up His bow where all could see. The Hebrew word translated **"rainbow"** refers to a **"bow and arrow"** - a weapon of war. When God hung up His bow He hung up His intent to destroy mankind.

Here's the jist of **the Noahic Covenant**... After the flood every time Noah felt a raindrop on his shoulder, or heard a thunderclap in the distance - *it was for Noah a crisis of faith...* Each time Noah 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 lean on God's grace? Or would he succumb to fear and doubt God's grace toward Him?*

God hung up His bow as proof of His grace. 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.

Again, the Earth was no longer a safe place. It was now a foreign and frightening environment. The various tribes succumbed to their fears, and in disobedience to God they gathered in Iraq - in the plain of Shinar.

Humanity joined together as one people, under one government, with one ruler by the name of *"Nimrod."* His 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 puts it, *"a mighty hunter against the Lord."* The idea being that Nimrod tried to draw people away from allegiance to God, and after himself.

Tradition says Nimrod was a skilled archer. He was known for his bow. God deliberately *hung up His bow*, but Nimrod *takes up his bow* to defend his followers.

Nimrod was a hunter, and legend has it he 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. And 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 loves to play on our fears, and in doing so sabotage our faith. He amplifies the bumps in the night.

He turns up the volume on the **“what ifs”** of life, and tortures us with what never happens. Satan wants us to believe God can't be trusted, or He's out to get us.

Notice what Nimrod does in Genesis 11.

Nimrod builds a tower to the heavens - not for God's glory, but to **“make a name for himself.”** We're told in verse 3, that in the construction of this observatory they use **“brick for stone, and asphalt for mortar.”** It seems ancient *asphalt* was a waterproofing material.

So here's what Nimrod does. He builds a water-proof skyscraper in the desert... *and why would anyone build a water-tight tower in the middle of a dust bowl?*

There's only one reason. If you're worried about a flood. *Nimrod refused to trust God and His rainbow!*

Nimrod was resentful and angry at God's judgment. He didn't trust God's covenant. He was suspicious of God's intentions. He thought He knew better than God. He doubted His mercy. He viewed God as the enemy.

*And I'm sure you know some modern Nimrods...*

Rather than trust in God's grace, they trust in themselves. In their minds they don't need God. They resent His authority and doubt His good intentions.

In essence, Nimrod called God a liar.

Nimrod hailed himself as humanity's Savior. His goal was to deliver mankind 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 crashed the party. He confused the original, universal language. A breakdown in communication caused a separation. It drove men apart - and scattered the people as God 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 and deal with mankind as a whole. He'll now choose a single man and bring salvation through his family.

In Genesis 11 Satan had orchestrate a worldwide *rebellion* by choosing **a man, named Nimrod** - and **a place, named Babel** - and **a means, called fear**.

But now in Genesis 12 God counters with the work of *redemption*. He establishes a fresh covenant. God 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 the OT and NT.* A better dividing line is between Genesis 11 and Genesis 12.

Through Genesis 11 God tries to establish a covenant with all of mankind - with the entire Adams' family. But man's sinful heart rallies against God...

So now from here until the end of the 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 root covenant from which the rest of the covenants stem... **The Abrahamic Covenant.**

**But here's tonight's big question**, will we trust in God's grace, and live by faith in a fearful, scary world?

Even in the midst of a pandemic virus, will we cower to fear, and in doing so deny our God? Or will we trust our welfare and destiny to a faithful, heavenly Father.

**God hung up His bow, will you hang up yours?**