

A Rainbow of God's Promises

Genesis 9:8-17

(preached Pine Grove 1/13/18; Sunday PM)

Introduction

This past week, the founder of Amazon Jeff Bezos and his wife Mackenzie announced their plans to divorce.

They had been married 25 years and had 4 children.

The reason the divorce is noteworthy is that Jeff Bezos is the richest man in the world with a net worth of 140 billion dollars.

In other words, this will be the world's richest divorce ever.

Since the Bezos live in the state of Washington, the assets of both will be split equally among the husband and wife.

In other words, Mrs. Bezos will get 70 billion dollars once the divorce is final..

Now the press has gone wild reporting on this split and coming divorce, but the biblical worldview of this situation is not interest but sadness.

In 2019, there will be almost 2 1/2 million divorces in America..

Now, the Bible is clear.

God allows divorce on the basis of adultery and desertion, but the Bible is also clear that God hates divorce.

Malachi 2:16..

16 For [w]I hate [x]divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel,

So why does God hate divorce?

Primarily due to fact that he established marriage in the very beginning.

God brought Eve to Adam and married them and designed their marriage to be for life.

God desired for marriage to be a lifelong covenant..

WE don't use that word anymore, but marriage was never intended to be a temporary arrangement.

It was never intended to be for as long as you 'felt like it', but sadly that is what marriage has become..

So why did God design marriage to be a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman?

Simple, that flowed from the character of God.

You see, God is a covenant keeping God.

When God makes a pledge, he keeps it no questions asked.

Now this may not seem shocking to you.

You may have understood this about God long ago.

You may have sung about God's faithfulness many times, but I assure you of this..

Israel was surrounded by nations who worshipped many gods, yet of none those supposed gods were reliable or trustworthy.

The gods were known as fickle gods who had to be pleased or else they would unleash wrath..

They were not gods who made promises to their followers much less kept their promises.

Yet, the God of Israel, the one true God, is a God of truth and honesty and dependability, and the first time that is described to us in the Bible is right here in Genesis 9..

Let me read this important set of verses to us and then we will go back and look at them in a little more detail.

WE will go back to verse 1 and read down to verse 17..

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the [a]sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. 4 Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 Surely I will require [b]your lifeblood; [c]from every beast I will require it. And [d]from every man, [e]from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

6

*"Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.*

7

*"As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
[f]Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."
8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him,
saying, 9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My
covenant with you, and with your [g]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 comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. 11 I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12 God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for [h]all successive generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will 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; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon 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.”

Tonight, I want us to look this idea of God being a covenant making and covenant keeping God..

In other words, God is God who makes a promise and keeps that promise.

He is not like man who breaks his word.

He is not like man who breaks his promise.

No, the God of the Bible.

The God of the universe is a God to be trusted because he does what he says he will do..

So, let's look at these 10 verses according to this outline on the screen..

And we will begin with this truth in verse 8...

I. God's Covenant to Noah was One-Sided (8-9a)

Last week, we opened chapter 9 looking at God's words to Noah once Noah and his family exited the ark.

In that exchange, God gave Noah instructions about the world after the flood.

And much of what we saw was simply a repeat of God's instructions to Adam when the earth was first created.

Noah was to multiply and fill the earth.

He was reminded by God that he was greater than the animal world.

He was also allowed to eat the animals as part of his diet.

However the animals needed to be cooked and eat while they were still alive..

And then we ended last week with God establishing the death penalty in this new world.

Though Noah may have been tempted to think that human life wasn't valued because of all the death that God brought into the world, God reminds him that life is valuable by instituting capital punishment for anyone who takes another human life..

Well, we get to verse 8, God continues to speak but the focus shifts from Noah in the post flood world to God in the post flood world..

And the first thing we see is that God begins to make a covenant with Noah in verses 8 and 9..

The first note we make is that this covenant to Noah is a one-sided promise..

Take note of the first part of verse 9..

“I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your [g]descendants after you;”

Unlike your wedding vows...

Unlike your pinkie promises to your friends..

Unlike agreements between two nations..

God’s covenant with Noah is unilateral..

In other words, the covenant that God is making with Noah requires nothing from Noah.

God is making a covenant to never flood the earth again, and it is not based on how good Noah can be..

It is not based on how well Noah worships God.

It is not based on what God told Noah to do in verses 1-7.

Instead, God is making a promise to Noah not based on anything that Noah can do.

It is based entirely on God's character..

This is important because guess what?

Noah is about to do some very bad things in the second half of this chapter...

But none of Noah's sins will cause God to break this covenant.

God's covenant with Noah is not a mutual agreement.

It is based in the faithfulness of God alone..

A second thing to see here is this..

II. God's Covenant to Noah was Never-Ending (9b)

Don't miss the end of verse 9..

I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your [g]descendants after you;

You may not think about it, but you sit here tonight as a descendant of Noah..

And God's promise to Noah to never flood the world away flows to your life tonight..

You don't have to worry tonight about being drown in another world wide flood..

There may be 999 other ways to die, but that one can be marked off the list because God's one-sided promise to Noah extends to be and you..

It is an everlasting promise..

But not only do it extend to me and you, it also extends to the entire world..

Look at verse 10...

WE will call this..

III. God's Covenant to Noah was Far-Reaching (10)

9 “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your [g]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 comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

Not only do we not have to worry about a global flood sweeping us away to our death, God's covenant extends to the animal world as well..

Though animals lack an eternal soul...

Though they do not bear the image of God..

God is not going to destroy them again through a worldwide flood.

That is part of his promise to Noah..

A fourth characteristic of God's covenant with Noah is found in verse 11..

We will call this..

IV. God's Covenant to Noah was Clear-Cut (11)

When we played kickball, we always chose sides by picking teams...

That can be brutal for kids especially if you aren't any good..

Well one of my good friends in 5th was horrible at kick ball.

He always got picked last, and I always felt so bad for him..

One day I told him that I was ever a captain, that I would take him with the very first pick..

And I knew when I made that promise to him that it was pretty safe that I would never be captain since 6th graders were always the captains and always picked the teams..

Well one day wouldn't you know, the 6th graders decided to let us be captains and pick the teams..

Now the pressure was really on.

I didn't want to disappoint the 6th grader that chose me to be captain and I didn't want to disappoint my friend either..

So I found a way to wiggle out.

I had the first pick but I decided to be really nice and let the other team pick first.

When it came my turn to pick, I didn't take my friend but chose a better player instead...

After the teams were chosen, my buddy came straight up to me and said what about your promise...

I told him, well I said if I had the very first pick that I would get you but I actually didn't pick very first since the other team did...

He didn't like that loophole, and I felt really bad..

But that is how earthly promises often go.

WE look for the way to wiggle out and most of the time, we find that way by not being very clear in our promises..

Well, guess what God doesn't do that.

Instead, he is very specific here in verse 11 with the contents of his covenant..

11 I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

The covenant that God makes Noah is clear.

He will not flood the entire earth again in order to destroy the earth..

Yes, there will be local floods..

Yes, there may be regional floods.

But God promises to never send a global flood again..

Now the world will be destroyed again, but it won't be due to a flood..

Next time, the earth will be destroyed through intense heat..

WE talked about that as we went through the book of Revelation verse by verse..

But the point of verse 11 is simple..

When God makes a promise, he makes the contents of that covenant very clear..

A 5th truth about God's covenant with Noah is this..

V. God's Covenant to Noah was Well-Marked (12-17)

People love supposed signs in the sky..

Astrology fools people out of billions of dollars each year with the promise that the stars tell us something about the events coming to earth..

Then there are supposed Bible teachers telling us to look at the moon in order to pinpoint a day for the end times..

There are also people who worship the sun and the planets..

Yet, God is clear.

The purpose of the sun, moon, stars, planets and any other thing in the sky is to point to the glory of God who made them all...

There is no sign that comes from Jupiter being in Orion or Netpune passing through Pleiades..

However, unbelieving have always tried to find signs in the sky..

There is one and only one sign that God has put in the sky to reveal something specific..

And that is the sign of the rainbow..

Let's read verse 12 again...

12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for [h]all successive generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will 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; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon 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."

Couple things for us to take note of here..

#1 - The rainbow is literally the 'bow' in Hebrew.

A bow is simply an instrument for fighting.

You take an arrow and put in in in your bow and it becomes a great weapon in the hands of a skilled warrior..

Well, the rainbow in the sky is a picture of a bow that God has hung up there..

In other words, God's waging war against the human race like He did when he sent the flood is over..

God is not in heaven today with a bow ready to fire at the earth to destroy it.

No, he has hung his bow in the clouds as reminder that this is not an age of war but an age of grace.

Now, to be clear.

The world still deserves wrath.

The world still deserves a world wide to sweep us away, but God had promised to never do that again..

And the rainbow hanging on the clouds is reminder that God is showing mercy.

He is not drawing his bow back.

It is instead hanging on the clouds..

It is a sign of his promise..

The second note to make here is this..

#2 - The rainbow is created when rain is mixed with sunshine.

I don't want to get into the technical aspects of how we see a rainbow in the sky, but rainbows are only visible as sunlight passes through raindrops..

Most often, we see rainbows after the storm has passed and the clouds give way to sunshine.

The rain is beyond us and the sun is beginning to shine on us again..

What a great picture of grace after wrath..

Look at this picture..

A tornado and a rainbow..

Now look Noah was not a fan of rain.

Needless to say, rain probably frightened him a great deal.

And the reason is simple.

The last time it rained on him, it rained a long time and caused a lot of damage..

But now, the rain will come and stop, and as it ends, God will sometimes allow the sun to pop out and Noah will see a rainbow...

A sign that the rain has gone and sunshine has come.

We understand that the rain will stop, but Noah didn't.

He had God's promise, but the sign in the sky would remind him that the rain had ended and the sun had returned..

I had a bad experience at the dentist's office as a little kid...

I was getting a filling in a tooth but they didn't give me enough gas to numb the pain and when the drill hit my tooth, it was painful..

As a result, I was always scared to death..

My dentist was named Dr. Keith, and he saw my fear, and he told me next time, that he would touch my cheek before he ever turned on his drill..

If I couldn't feel my cheek, it would be a sign that the gas was working..

Let me tell you what..

Every time I went in that office, I made him touch my cheek 4 or 5 times before I ever let him pick up that drill..

God didn't give the sign of the rainbow to be sweet or sentimental, it was a necessary sign for Noah to let him know that the rain had passed..

#3 - The rainbow is still a sign today.

I grew up being told that leprechauns kept a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow..

I grew up watching the wizard of Oz where Dorothy sang a world over the rainbow..

I grew up hearing Kermit look for a rainbow connection..

Now my kids grow up where rainbows are connected with lifestyles of sin and immorality..

But this is nothing new..

Some Indian tribes saw rainbows as bridges for the dead to go to another place.

Some Russian tribes see rainbows as the tongue of the sun.

Some African nations see rainbows as signs of evil spirits bring drought on their land.

Brazilian culture sees the rainbow as a snake like creature, and Greek mythology has made the rainbow into all sorts of instruments of their false gods..

Needless to say, unbelievers work hard to kidnap the rainbow for their own superstitions or even to promote their own way of sin.

But also needless to say, the rainbow will never be hijacked from God's description of it here.

The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant to Noah.

Conclusion

Genesis 9:8-17 describe the Noahic covenant..

A covenant that was one sided.

A covenant that never ending..

A covenant that was far reaching..

A covenant that was clear cut..

And a covenant that is well-marked by the rainbow in the sky..

When you see the rainbow, God is reminding you that the rain has passed.

Therefore a worldwide flood is not coming.

And it isn't coming because because God has promised that it won't.

But let me also offer two additional things that should come to you mind when you see a rainbow..

#1 - Worship a God who can be trusted.

Just like God promised to never flood the world again, he also made other promises in the Scripture..

And what this means for us tonight is simple.

You won't wake in the morning and find out that the way to be saved has changed.

God isn't going to remove his promise to save those who repent and trust in Christ's sacrifice for isn.

So you don't have to worry about finding a new way to heaven.

When God makes a covenant, He keeps the covenant.

The rainbow in the sky should remind us specifically that there won't be a flood, but it also remind us generally that God is faithful to keep his word.

#2- Worship a God who doesn't depend on you to keep your word.

Though we would all like to think that we are people of our word, we aren't.

We have all broken promises in our lives to others..

We have all failed to keep our word at times..

And look if God promises to us were based on us keeping our end of the bargain to Him, we are all in big trouble..

Now look, I encourage your faithfulness to God.

I encourage your commitment to right living.

I encourage to to keep your word and be trustworthy.

Those are all good qualities encouraged in the Bible..

But the bottom line is this.

IF our salvation depends on us, we are all going to lose it about as quickly as we get it.

The good news is that our salvation doesn't hang our ability to keep our word.

It rests on God's ability to keep His.

And I can assure that God's word is sure and never broken..

If you have truly repented and trusted Christ, God's covenant to you is that you are forgiven and headed to heaven..

And that promise is as sure as the rainbow in the sky.

Let us pray.