New Rules for a New World — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 8:20–9:17 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, June 4, 2023 · *Living Right*

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All right, well thanks to the team for leading us in worship this morning. Sounded great as always. How do y'all like the new song? Isn't that awesome? I've been waiting for that new song. I know I've never asked you to play it, but I've been secretly waiting for that new song for a very long time. I love that song. It'll be stuck in your head all day, and you'll be glad—it's one of those songs you're glad it's stuck in your head, not like Britney Spears. So if you love Britney Spears, that's fine too.

But we're going to be in Genesis chapter 9 this morning if you want to take your Bible and turn there. If you're new to our church, we typically preach through books of the Bible and we've been preaching through the book of Genesis for the last couple of months and we're at a point in the book of Genesis where everything has just gone wrong, and so the title of the series is "Living Right in a World That's Gone Wrong," and one of the reasons that the book of Genesis is so helpful for answering that question is because it doesn't just explain how the world was made originally good, it explains what happened to make it break bad, and then a template for how to live in that kind of a system.

And for those of you new to the Bible, basically God creates everything good. He creates Adam and Eve, he creates man and woman in his image, He tells them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. They are his little representatives on the earth, and they are going to advance God's purposes on the earth. And they do a pretty decent job of that up until Genesis chapter 3, when the serpent comes along and tempts them to sin against God, to do the one thing that God said don't do, and then they do that.

It brings sin into the world, sin brings about brokenness. So God drives them out of the garden. He no longer lets them eat from the tree of eternal life. And we see in Genesis chapter 4 onward the results of that sin. We see Cain's murder of Abel in Genesis chapter 4. We see the descendants of Cain kind of populate wickedness on the earth. And by the time

we got to Genesis chapter 6, we saw that every thought of every man was only evil continually. Men were living up to like 800, 900 years old.

It would be like if you were an evil person and you had that long to live. You can imagine the kinds of ingenuity you could come up with. Imagine Hitler not being stopped but living for 600, 700 years. The world would get bad today, and the world got bad back in the day. And so God decides to send a flood to judge the earth and to kind of destroy the destroyers of the earth and that's where we left off last week. God picked one man named Noah. He saved Noah and his family through this thing called the ark.

They step off of the ark in Genesis chapter 9—or I'm sorry, Genesis chapter 8—and they're very grateful. They offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and in Genesis chapter 9 we're going to see the new rules for that new world and those new rules for that new world are put into the context of what's called a covenant. Now I know the word covenant for some of you might be new. If you're married, you already know what a covenant is because marriage is a covenant. When you got married, you didn't just sign a license or a contract.

You made promises to that other person, that person made promises to you. Those promises and commitments before God and other people, that's called a covenant. It's kind of a formal agreement between two people and there are stipulations and parameters to the partnership and that's what we have in Genesis chapter 9. Except it's not a covenant between two people, like a marriage or a landlord or a mortgage. It's a covenant between God and humanity. And God's covenants are central to his redemptive plans. In fact, I'm so excited about this morning, because when you can come to understand the covenants of God, you can really get a big bird's-eye view of God's big redemptive plan.

Because God doesn't just make this covenant. He had a covenant with Adam, he has a covenant here, he has a covenant with Abraham, he has a covenant with David, he has a new covenant that all the prophets, major and minor prophets talk about, and all of those covenants are ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus. And so when we can kind of get our hands around this idea of a covenant, I think we go a long way of understanding how God operates and how we are to relate to him in light of how he operates.

And so if you like taking notes, a covenant: formal agreement between two parties, central to the plans of God, and abundant throughout the Scripture. I think you can look at Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as a covenant. The word covenant isn't used there, but you have God selecting a mediator, Adam. He tells him what to do and what not to do. There are blessings and curses based on that mediator's adherence to the covenant. And then there is this sign or this promise of God to make provision for their weakness. That is what you're going to see in Noah's Covenant.

We left off last week with God establishing this covenant with Noah. It's in Genesis chapter 6, the first time the word covenant is used. The Lord says to Noah, "I'm going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, and I'm going to destroy all living creatures on the earth." This is Genesis chapter 6, verses 17 and 18. He says in verse 18, "But I will establish my covenant with you." That Hebrew word covenant is the Hebrew word *berit*. It's the first time that the word covenant is used right there.

And after Noah responds to the covenant, he says, "I'll do what you want me to do if you're going to do what you promise to do." So God keeps his end of the bargain. He saves Noah, he saves his family, and Noah keeps his end of the bargain in building the ark and surviving the flood. We left off last week with Noah building an altar to the Lord as a response to those two core truths. Number one, God makes a promise. And number two, mankind makes a commitment. Every covenant that you look at in the Bible, whether it's this one or any other covenant, in every covenant, promises are given and commitments are made.

We saw the promise of God fulfilled last week with Noah being delivered through the flood, and now we're going to see Noah's commitments to God's covenant in chapter 9. So these are the new rules for a new world. It says in chapter 8, verse 20, that Noah built an altar to the Lord and he took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird, and he offered them on the altar. "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'" And then God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." God's people said, "Amen." "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Then he drills it into Noah.

He says, "You, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it." And then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for

every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And so this is, ladies and gentlemen, God's covenant with Noah. And as I said earlier, it's the first time the word covenant is used in the Bible, and I really believe if you can get your head around this covenant, you can get your head around every covenant in the Bible, and if you can understand covenants, you can understand God's redemptive plan for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so today may feel a little bit like, I don't know, theological or maybe a little bit more teaching than preaching, but I promise I'll preach at the end.

Okay? I want you to get a lay of the land. And so I want to show you the five elements of every biblical covenant. And we're going to break them down piece by piece, line by line. You've got the mediator, you've got the community—I'm sorry, you've got the mediator of the covenant, the conditions of the covenant, the community of the covenant, the promise of the covenant, and the sign of the covenant. And here's the most important thing to remember with every biblical covenant, whether it's here with Noah or Abraham or Moses or David or the new covenant: Every covenant of God is established by grace.

Remember, when God established his covenant with Noah, he was not so impressed with Noah's righteousness. Noah was just as wicked as every other man on the earth. It was his repentance and faith in Christ, or his faith in God's provision that made him righteous. He was not himself a very virtuous person. And that's true of every relationship that God enters into covenantally. It is a relationship based on grace, not because we're somehow deserving of it, but because of his grace he just chooses people and groups of people to advance his purposes on the earth.

And so how does it work? Number one, he chooses a mediator. The mediator is the person who kind of mediates between God and the world, or God and the group that is going to receive the covenant. In Genesis chapter 1, the mediator was Adam. In Genesis chapter 9, you have a new mediator, and his name is Noah. You might think of Noah as kind of like Adam 2.0. Some people talk about Jesus as Adam 2.0. He's not truly Adam 2.0. Noah is Adam 2.0, because Noah is eerily similar to Adam in ways that I personally found absolutely fascinating.

I'm going to nerd out just a little bit, but—unreal similarities. Both Adam and Noah inherit a world out of watery chaos. We're going to look at the similarities in just a few moments. Both Adam and Noah are made in and explicitly associated with the *imago Dei*, or the image of God. In fact, the image of God is not used very often in the Bible. It's used in Genesis. It's used here with Noah, and it's used to talk about Jesus. But not very many other places besides that. It's kind of unique that Noah is associated with the image of God.

All men are created in God's image, but there's this explicit affirmation Noah is in God's image. Both Noah and Adam rule over animals. Both Noah and Adam are said to have walked with God. Both Noah and Adam have a mandate to cultivate the creation. Both Noah and Adam sin against God in the same way: through their diet. Adam sins against God by eating the fruit of the tree that he shouldn't have ate. Noah sins against God by building a—imagine how bad you want to get drunk. You plant a vineyard, grow the grapes, just so you can spoil the grapes, ferment the grapes, and Noah gets drunk and sins against God and ends up cursing his family tree.

We're going to look at that on Father's Day. So both men sin against God. Both men's sin against God results in shameful nakedness. Both men have their shameful nakedness covered, as an act of grace by the Lord. And both men have three sons. And in both cases, those three sons are split into two main groups, the fruit of the woman and the fruit of the serpent, or the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Eerie similarities between Adam and Noah. And the other thing I just personally found so fascinating, it's not just that the two men are similar as mediators, it's that the worlds that they inhabit are similar.

For example, in Genesis chapter 7, when it talks about the flood coming on the earth, it begins to rain 40 days and 40 nights. The author of Genesis, who is Moses, he doesn't say it rained like cats and dogs for 40 days and 40 nights. He doesn't use that language. He uses language that is pulled directly from Genesis chapter 1. If you look in Genesis chapter 7, this is the story of the flood. It says "the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened."

Now, why does he use that language? Because that's exactly the language used of the initial creation in Genesis 1. That God on day two[1] made the expanse, and how did he make the sky? He separated the waters. He took the waters above and the waters below and he separated those two and that's how you had the sky. And so what you have in Genesis chapter 7 with the flood is the uncreating of creation. It's kind of like it's reversing it: Here's the order, and then we're going to reverse the order, and that's the world that Noah inherits, a world that comes out of that watery chaos.

Another similarity, a similar architect, when it talks in Genesis chapter 8, verse 1 about the wind blowing over the water so that the water began to subside. That's the same Hebrew word. It's the Hebrew word *ruach*, which is the same word used of the Holy Spirit in Genesis chapter 1 when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep," and the *ruach*, or the Spirit of God, "was hovering over the face of the waters." So the initial act of creation, the architect was the Holy Spirit, the Word of God—that Jesus Christ created through that Spirit—and now in this new world created for this new mediator, you have the same spirit as the architect.

You see a similar structure, I'm not going to show you this, but if you look at chapter 1 verse 10 compared to chapter 8 verse 11. In both cases, the water is separated from the land, so like that's the basic structure of the world. You've got the seas and the land. You have a similar blessing in chapter 1—all of chapter 1, really. At the end of every day in Genesis chapter 1, you have God looking at what he made, and what does he say? "It is good." And then on day six, he says, "It is very good."

But if you look at Genesis chapter 8, verse 17. I'm sorry, I'm skipping ahead. You have a similar blessing used of the animals. You have a similar affirmation. Let's talk about that in just a second, but before I get there, the similar blessing is "be fruitful and multiply." You see this language used in Genesis chapter 8, verse 17. Notice who he mentions. He talks about the living creatures. He talks about the birds, he talks about the creeping things that creep, and he says to all of them, "Be fruitful and multiply."

It's the same exact thing that he says in Genesis chapter 1, verse 22 and following. He mentions the sea creatures, living creatures, winged creatures, just like down here. And he blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply." And then finally, the similar affirmation: that God looks at all of his creation and says, "It is good." And then if you look in chapter 8, verse 21, we just read it a minute ago. It says that the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, and the Lord said in his heart, "I'm never again going to curse man."

That's not necessarily the Lord saying it is good, but it kind of sounds like it to me. It's not what it was. It's not what it could be, but it's better than what it was. You see similarity after similarity after similarity, new mediator, new world. So here's why I bring all of this up. This is not the only similarity when I talk about covenants. It seems like every time God establishes a new covenant, there's this pattern that gets repeated. You might think of this as God's historical pattern for establishing partnerships.

God picks a person, whether it's Adam or Noah or Abraham or David, he picks a person. He establishes a covenant. That covenant has conditions: "Do this, don't do this. And if you'll kind of do what I want you to do, you can partner with me in advancing my purpose." That's the gist of the covenant. But then what happens is sin comes in, the sin, the flesh, the world, the devil, evil comes in and begins to disrupt God's plans. And eventually, in many cases, it gets so bad that God has to start over.

So he picks a new mediator with—I wouldn't say new plans, but maybe like an additional phase of the plan to finish out his original intention. And you see that repeat itself throughout the Old Testament, over and over and over, with Abraham, with Israel, Moses, David, the prophets, the Babylonian captivity, the Assyrian captivity. Plan, mediator, disruption, new mediator. That's the template that eventually culminates in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why covenants are important and that's why the covenant mediator is a big deal. So that's the first phase, the mediator.

The second phase is the conditions, the stipulations. Almost every covenant has conditions that are spelled out with blessings and curses. This one doesn't. But it still has conditions, just like in Genesis chapter 1, the conditions were: be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, and you'll be blessed; or you can eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but then you're going to be cursed and you're going to surely die. Those are the conditions. In this case, there's no language about blessing and curses, but you do have conditions, and they're laid out around three basic ideas.

I heard one guy summarize them under three F's. You have conditions around family or being fruitful and multiplying. You have conditions around food or your diet. And then you have conditions around capital punishment or your fellow man. So let's jump over to the first one, the conditions around family. This is in Genesis chapter 9, verse 1; he says the same thing in Genesis chapter 9, verse 7. He says, "Be fruitful, multiply, increase greatly on the earth, and multiply in it." The reason I think this is important to point out when it comes to this new world is a lot of people today say the same things that they said in other ancient Near Eastern cultures in their flood narratives.

They said the reason that God judged the world through the flood is because of overpopulation. You hear the same thing today, we got too many people making too much CO2 emissions. That's our problem. We need to kind of decrease our population. But what you see from the Lord is the opposite of that. The problem is not an overabundance of people. The problem was the overabundance of evil and sin. But when it comes to this new world and building this new world, you notice God, number one, makes family foundational as a building block to a civilization that flourishes.

And he wants lots of families, lots of mommies and daddies, lots of babies multiplying throughout the earth. That's how the civilization is going to flourish. That's number one. Number two is food. There's a stipulation around killing animals and our diet. He says in chapter 9, verse 2, into your hands these animals are delivered. He said, "Just like I gave you every green plant for food, now you're going to have any food that you want"—you know, cows, deer, alligator, snake—"but you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

Now some people look at this and say, "Well, I guess you can't have your steak medium rare, because it has the lifeblood in it." I promise you that is not what this verse means. And I'm not just saying that because I love my steaks medium rare. I actually think it might be a sin against God to do it too well done, or using ketchup or A1 sauce. It's not like a sin, like it's against God's law, but it is—it's not human, right? It's kind of crazy. I'm totally joking. Some of y'all like your steaks well done.

Who is it? Is it President Trump who eats his steak well done with ketchup? I can't—it might not be. I might not be. Okay, you two, don't cancel me. But my mom always had A1 sauce on her steaks. I never understood that. As soon as I got out of the house, I learned how to really

eat a steak. But it's not talking about that. Here's what it is talking about. It's talking about the lifeblood. The lifeblood of an animal was its life. And so he's saying when you kill these animals, you're not going to be animalistic in the way you go about it.

And if you look at a true hunter, true hunters, when they harvest an animal, there's some dignity, there's some honor there. It goes as far back as Genesis chapter 9. If you saw someone who like grabbed a bird and just ripped its head off with his teeth, you would say that's inhumane. That's just wrong. That shouldn't be. That's part of this Noahic covenant. You're not just going to kill animals like other animals kill animals. You're not going to be like a lion tearing into a zebra with all the nature red in tooth and claw.

No, there needs to be some dignity. You need to kill it, harvest it, quarter it out, cook it. Because you're made in my image. There needs to be order and structure. And then the third stipulation is around fellow man. This is the Latin term *lex talionis*: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." I know people today look at this and say, "How barbaric. I can't believe the Bible affirms the death penalty." And that's because we live in a culture where a lot of people despise the idea of a death penalty.

And I actually think there is a legitimate debate of whether or not the death penalty can be justly administrated through particular systems, because we know that sometimes courts and judges get it wrong. That's a separate debate as to whether or not—does God affirm the death penalty? He clearly does. And it was given to Noah as the new rules for the new world. And instead of looking at it as a principle of barbaric kind of chaos and excess, it's really, if you think about it, a principle of restraint. Because in Genesis chapter 4, when Cain kills Abel, the descendants of Cain—one of his descendants named Lamech[2]—escalated the rage and the anger and the murder that he received from his forefather Cain.

If you look at—it's Genesis chapter 9—Genesis chapter 4, maybe 16, 17, 18, somewhere around there, he says, "If the vengeance of Cain is sevenfold, the vengeance of Lamech is seventy-sevenfold."[3] It's kind of like the old Hatfields and McCoys. If you punch me, I, you know, kill you. And if you kill one of mine, then I kill your whole tribe. It's just you punch me, I punch you harder. That escalation is what characterized the world leading up to the flood. It's because sin grows like a cancer; it gets worse and worse and worse.

And here is the Lord saying to Noah, "Okay, we got new rules because it's a new world." And in this world that is plagued by sin, there will be a principle of restraint. If you kill someone made in the image of God, you will die, but it will be by the hands of other men, and it will be proportional. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth—which really leads to the final thing I want to say about these conditions. All of these conditions have similarities to the original conditions given to Adam.

Both are told to be fruitful and multiply. Both have explicit affirmations about the image of God. But in this case, in Genesis chapter 9, there's this tacit admission, or not even tacit, it's an explicit admission that this world is unlike the original world because this world is plagued with this disease called human depravity. That original sin that we inherited from Adam, even though God destroyed the earth and destroyed every living person on the earth, and he destroyed the destroyers except for Noah and his family. This righteous man—even that salvation of that one righteous man was not sufficient to rid the earth of sin.

Because it's still there. And you're going to see with Noah, he's not all that great. He's going to sin against God and curse his family. And so these are God's rules for a world that will perpetually be wrestling with this disease. And so since the world in which we live is not a utopian world, people are not basically good, the world will not basically get better. It's not that basically everything is okay, but every now and then it messes up. No, there's a basic intrinsic depravity to human people, which brings a basic level of human depravity throughout the earth.

But God in his grace has instituted things like governance and rules and authorities to restrain and restrict human evil and to enforce righteous judgments when those restraints are gone beyond what they need to go beyond. And that's what you see with these conditions. It's really, I think, a framework for future government. When the Bible talks about in Romans 13, submit to the governing authorities, Respect those who rule over you, pray for your leaders it says that's because God institutes these governments for your good. Because you live in a world this broken and full of evil, and he's risen up these people with this authority to punish evil and wrongdoers and restrain it.

So that's the conditions. You got the mediator, you got the conditions. Number three, you've got the covenant community. We'll go through these quickly. The community in Genesis 9 is different from any other covenant community, because almost every other covenant is made with a specific group. But in Genesis chapter 9, it's not the remnant, it's all of creation and it's every generation. So if you go through in chapter 9, verses 10 to 12, he says it's with every living creature, every beast, all flesh, every creature, all future generations, so on and so forth, all flesh, all creatures over and over and over.

It's painstakingly obvious that this is not just a covenant with Noah and his family, but it's with every subsequent generation that comes from Noah and his family. And it's not just for people, it's also for animals. In other words, it's not just a covenant of special grace or salvific grace for God's people alone, but it's a covenant of common grace given to all of creation, of God restraining and holding back their sin and their evil and the righteous judgment that should come as a result—which leads to the fourth thing, which is the covenant promise.

And in this case, the promise is to preserve the earth. He says, "I will never destroy the earth again by water." If you go back to Genesis chapter 8, verse 21, the Lord smells the pleasing

aroma and he says that from here on out there's going to be summer, winter, harvest, seedtime, those kinds of things. And then in verse 22 he says, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." This is the Lord giving to creation what every investor wants out of the stock market, right?

Consistency, predictability, regularity—that's God's gift to us in this covenant. And so the fact that we can plant the seeds at the same time every year and expect the rains at the same time every year—except for some years it gets like crazy rain like we had this year—and the same harvest every year. That's a gift of God's grace through this covenant given to Noah. And it's not just given to Christians or Jews, it's given to everybody, humans and animals alike. And then you have the promise of the covenant ultimately, I think, pointing to Jesus with that phrase, "while the earth remains." it's a reminder that the earth will not remain forever.

Every covenant promise ultimately points to Jesus Christ. How does this covenant point to Jesus? Well, if you look at 2 Peter chapter 3, it talks about God's destruction of the earth through water, and that he's going to come again and destroy the earth, but this time not through water, but through fire. He's talking about the end times. He says people mock and they belittle, they make jokes about the second coming of Jesus and they "deliberately overlook" the fact that this same thing happened a long time ago. The earth "was formed out of water."

God spoke the creation into existence through water, and then he destroyed the creation that existed through water. "But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up"—not for water but—"for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." In other words, this covenant of not destroying the earth through the flood is preparing us for a final judgment after years and years and years of God's patience and delay in which Jesus comes again and the earth is destroyed through fire. And I know you got people who talk about global warming and the earth heating up and all of those things.

It really is interesting how what you might call the ungodly or the unchristian people, people who don't come from a Christian worldview are still beginning to see some of the patterns of a heat death. The earth burning up through a heat death is exactly what the scripture says is going to happen during the end of days. And no amount of prevention is going to stop it. And then finally, you have the covenant sign. With this, we'll be finished. The final element is the covenant sign. It's given in verses 12 and 13.

It's the sign of the rainbow. God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." The Hebrew word is not rainbow. I don't even know if there is a Hebrew word for rainbow. It's

just the word for bow, as in bow and arrow. And a bow and arrow back in that time was a weapon of choice, you know, it was a formidable weapon.

You could kill someone from a long way away. And God's activity in the flood was essentially God saying, "I'm at war with you. You have offended me. There is hostility. The destroyers are destroying my creation. You can't do that and get away with it." So God comes at the human race with this bow and war, and after he floods the earth, it's as if he's putting his bow up on the rack and he's saying, "I'm done. It's no longer going to be a threat to you. So Noah, next time you hear raindrops pitter-patter on your roof, don't let it trigger you.

You know, it's going to be okay. The earth will never again be destroyed." And this sign is a sign given to you so that you might remember. And it's not the only covenant with a sign. Almost all the covenants have a sign. You have the covenant with Abraham, which is a sign of circumcision. You have this covenant with Israel, which is the sign of the Sabbath. You have the covenant with David, which, come to think of it, doesn't have a sign. Maybe it's the throne. You have the covenant—the new covenant.

We just talked about the sign of the covenant with baptism. And the Lord's Supper—Jesus said, "This bread is my body broken for you. This wine is the cup of my blood, which is shed for you." And so every time we take the Lord's Supper, what do we say? We say, "Do this in remembrance." Why? Because covenant signs are given so that we might remember. Except in this case it's not so that we would remember, but God says, "I'm giving you this sign so that I will remember." Verse 14 says, "When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature."

Now God's not saying this because he forgets stuff. Okay, he doesn't. He's not plagued with old age, even though he is the oldest being in the universe. You can see this language throughout the Old Testament when God remembers somebody or he remembers something. He's not calling it to mind as if he forgot. He's moving with compassion towards the object of his remembrance. You're going to see this in Exodus. You're going to see this with Moses. You'll see this throughout the prophets, major and minor prophets. God remembers his covenant. And that's God's way of saying, "I'm going to make good on my promise.

You're about to see my faithfulness. You're about to experience my provision." He remembers. And every time he sees that rainbow, he remembers and he moves towards the earth—the object, the community of the covenant—with mercy and grace. And so those are the five pillars. The mediator, the community, the conditions, the promise, and the sign. And every single one of those pillars ultimately points to the ultimate covenant, which is the new covenant fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's a better Adam, he's a better Noah, it's a better salvation than the salvation of the ark.

It's a more destructive judgment, the judgment through fire. He's better than Abraham. In fact, everything given to Abraham, the promise that "I will make your name great and you'll be a father of many nations"—we don't experience that covenant promise. We're not Jewish, but in Christ we're grafted in to that race, to that chosen people. In Christ, every single one of the covenant promises are experienced in their fullness. The promises about a new heavens, a new earth, a new land; the promise to Adam and Eve that from the seed of the woman will come a Messiah who will crush the head of the serpent.

We experience that promise in Jesus Christ. We are liberated from sin. We are liberated from the penalty of sin. We have eternal life with God after we die and go to heaven, all because of the person and the work of Jesus Christ. Every covenant points back to him. It is in him that there is a kingdom that extends without end. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, not just for the 33 years that he walked the earth, but forevermore, and that when he comes again every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, and we who are in him will not just watch him reign from a distance, but we will actually join him.

We will be seated on thrones, just like he is seated on the throne, and we will rule the nations. All of God's promises, they're experienced, they're received, they're given to us through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But that's not the best part. The best part isn't just the covenant promises. The best part is that God's covenantal love is fully received through the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't have time to develop this, but if you'll go home and you'll study every covenant of God, and then you'll do a little word search in your Bible on the Hebrew word *hesed*.

It's a little Hebrew word that was exclusively reserved for God's covenantal love. Not his general love for all of humanity, but his covenantal love for those unique people who were chosen to enter into a relationship with him. I love how the *Jesus Storybook Bible* translates the word *hesed*. It says it's God's Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love. That's how God loves us in Christ. You ever had a day where you just came home and said to your family, "I just need a little grace today. I just need a little mercy.

It's been one of those days." And your family, as imperfect as they are, every now and then will just cut you a little slack. That dynamic, that *hesed* love, is what God is saying: "I will always give you. I will never not give you that kind of mercy and that kind of grace." The Lord's mercies "are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'" Because "the Lord is good to those who wait for him." The love that all of us want.

The love to be fully understood and fully known, weaknesses, warts and all, and to be loved anyway. The love that even when we fail to meet our end of the obligation, even when we don't—in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer—even when we renege and fall short

and sin against our heavenly Father, he is faithful still because his covenant with us is not based on our performance. It's based entirely on his grace, entirely on his character and his promise. And all of that love is given to us through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why we should understand covenants because every covenant points to Jesus. And when you enter into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, your life will never be the same. You will be grafted in, you will be welcomed into this new family, this new relationship—that the love of God will actually begin to heal your brokenness and it will begin to expose you in ways that you thought, "I would never be exposed." But even as he exposes you, warts and all, that love from God begins to heal you and restore you and transform you because it's a special, special kind of love.

And if you've never entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, if you're kind of one of those people who say, "Well, I hope my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds," and you're just kind of under this general Noahic covenant, You need to move from general to special. You need to move from out of Christ to in Christ. And the way that the Bible says that happens is by faith. Just like Noah heard God's word and said, "I think I'd rather be saved." So he turned and he did what God wanted him to do.

That was that covenant. This covenant, the invitation is different but the same: the invitation is for you to repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. And to put your faith not in your good deeds or your record or some prayer or baptism, but to put your absolute confident trust in Jesus and his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave. So that when you stand before God one day, and he says, "Why should I let you in? Why should I love you? Why are you worthy?"

You say, "I'm not worthy. I don't deserve it. But I believe Jesus died in my place for my sins as an act of incredible mercy and grace. And I've received that into my life. Nothing in my hands I bring, only to the cross I cling." That's where my confidence lies. If that's not where your confidence is this morning, then the Holy Spirit of God may be saying to you, "Today's the day of salvation." Today's the day where you repent and you put your faith in Jesus as Lord. So we're going to have a time of response.

The band's going to—or Cheryl's going to come up and play some songs, and the altar's going to be open if you want to make a public decision. You might be one of those people who says, "Well, I need to think about this, and I have some questions, and I'm wrestling with some things." And if that's the case, you can scan the QR code and put your information in there and we'll follow up with you later this week. But as we respond to the Lord, would you just ask the Lord to give you eyes to see the fullness of his covenantal love towards us in Christ?

And then would you ask him to give you understanding for how you ought to respond to that love and grace and mercy? And I promise you, if you'll pray that prayer, the Lord will begin

to show you specific areas of your life, areas of anxiety or disappointment or sin, where all of that is really stemming from a failure to really live in the covenantal love of God. And would you just ask him, "Would you restore the joy of my salvation? Would you bring me back under the umbrella of that love so that my soul might be healed and my life be restored—your great love for me?"

Father in heaven, we thank you for this time. We thank you for weak, broken men like Noah, who are a reminder to us that your grace is not given because we deserve it. Your grace is given because we need it. And you're good, and you're generous, and you're kind. And so forgive us for trying to live lives as though we can earn it or deserve it, or living lives of fear and rebellion and anxiety because we know we don't deserve it, but we don't believe you love us enough to give it.

Would you draw us near to your throne of grace even now, as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, that we would come with true hearts, coming as we are, hiding nothing, bringing nothing other than absolute surrender and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "on day one"; God makes the expanse and separates the waters above from the waters below on the second day. Source: Genesis 1:6–8 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Laban" (twice); Cain's descendant who boasts of escalated vengeance is Lamech (Laban is Jacob's uncle, much later in Genesis). Source: Genesis 4:18–24; 24:29 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "If the vengeance of Cain was onefold or twofold, the vengeance of Laban is sevenfold"; Lamech says, "If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold" (Genesis 4:24; the verses are 4:23–24). Source: Genesis 4:15, 23–24 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩