

# ***Sabbath School Today***

## **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

### ***The Promise God's Everlasting Covenant***

#### **Lesson 3: "All Future Generations"**

If you knew for certain that Jesus Christ Himself, the true Christ, was going to speak in the town square at a certain time, I am sure you would cancel all other appointments and go and listen. But what I mean is, deep in your heart you would like to hear what Jesus says to us to day in our modern world.

Luke reports to us in his chapter 17 what Jesus said about our end-times today. The people carried on their pleasure-seeking "until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (17:27). To those people, the Flood came suddenly, even though Noah had faithfully warned them for 120 years. Right up until "the day" when the door of the ark was shut, there the people were outside the ark—defying God, insulting Him, trampling upon His holy law. And what does Jesus say? "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man."

We can see something encouraging even today: the rainbow. It's a pledge on the part of our Creator-Savior God that He will never again permit a flood to wipe out life on earth. It's a simplistic promise that appeals to a child's sense of wonder, but even our

most sophisticated university scientists can wonder like a child and sense the rainbow tugging at their heart.

(a) What is the “everlasting covenant” (Gen. 9:16; Heb. 13:20)? (b) What does it mean for us to live under the New Covenant today?

May the Lord save us from controversy and confusion!

(a) Obviously, “the everlasting covenant” of Gen. 9:16 and Heb. 13:20 has to be the same, for “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33). And Gen. 9:16 makes clear that it is a promise that God makes to “every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth,” symbolized by the rainbow. God’s covenants are never bargains He strikes with man; they are unilateral promises He makes.

(b) But we humans are in love with the idea that we can make bargains with God; we want to be able to help save ourselves. It is too humbling to our proud souls to realize that we are dependent 100% on God fulfilling His promise to save us. The rainbow is a “promise” from God to every human being, good or bad. Because of that promise, God is able to treat every human with grace, as though he/she had never sinned. The grace in that “everlasting covenant” makes it possible for Him to make “His sun rise on the

evil and on the good, and [to] send(s) rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

(c) The same “everlasting covenant” is God’s promise to every human being on earth to “make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Heb. 13:20). That’s why the Father gave His Son that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Christ loves the world, He died for the world, He redeemed the world, He died the world’s second death (Heb. 2:9), “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21), the “us” being “every man.” He wants “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4; if we had the courage to tell “every man” that “knowledge of the truth,” the full truth, more would believe).

(d) But every man has freedom of choice, and many resist and reject what Christ has already done for them, promised them, and given them because acceptance includes deep humbling of heart before God. They deny and nullify His grace for them and so they condemn themselves.

(e) Thus the “old covenant” is always based on man’s promise; the “new covenant” is always God’s promise. Come, get under the “new.”

\* As we read the story in **Genesis 9** we find a most curious detail: God says, “Behold, I establish My

covenant . . . with every living creature, . . . of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth” (vss 8-13). Can that be true? It seems fantastic—God “making a covenant” with all the birds and animals!? Doesn’t He have more important things to do than make bargains with elephants and mice and sparrows?

\* But wait a moment: He didn’t make a “bargain” or a “contract” or a “transaction” with these dumb creatures! Yes, He did humble Himself to make a PROMISE to them, but He did not exact from the birds and beasts any promise in return. If you’ll look at the fauna of the earth, they simply receive the favor at the hand of God, and go on living—enjoying the gift of life at His hand, even eating out of His hand (see Ps. 145:15, 16).

\* But wait a moment more: that PROMISE of God was made to you and me just as it was to the birds and beasts (Gen. 9:9). You can’t be a Christian unless you humble your heart and line up with them, awaiting your turn, and eat out of His hand, too (see John 6:51-53).

\* That PROMISE of God to us and the creatures alike is His blessed New Covenant. Don’t kid yourself into thinking that now you must reciprocate by making promises to God. You must reciprocate, yes—a million times over: but not in promising Him obedience and good works. Your job is to BELIEVE His PROMISES to you. And then, wonder of wonders, all the obedience

flows from a heart where He has written His law of *agape* love, His ten commandments.

**SECOND QUARTER 2021**  
**SABBATH SCHOOL INSIGHT #3**  
**APRIL 17, 2021**  
***“ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS”***

"And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" Genesis 6:8.

Praise the Lord for the opportunity to review God's covenant promises this quarter!

The Sabbath School Insights #2 posted last week provides an excellent foundation of the study on the covenants this quarter. It is worth re-reading as we continue our lesson this week.

One of the great features of the 1888 message of righteousness by faith was the clarity with which the covenants were presented. In this Insights we will highlight the everlasting covenant and then see how it is connected to the covenant God made with Noah. As Lyndi noted, every covenant promise made to Adam, Noah, Moses, Daniel, etc. is derived from the original everlasting covenant.

What was the original covenant that God made?

It was the "counsel of peace" that was "between them both" (Zechariah 6:13) in which the triune members of the Godhead pledged themselves to rescue man, should he fall, at a staggering and infinite personal cost. This everlasting covenant was made "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

In the beginning God gave Adam both a home (the garden of Eden) and rest from labor (the Sabbath). Adam's fall brought sorrow and heartache to the universe. Without our permission and before we even existed, Adam's sin destroyed all hope of the future and brought condemnation to all his posterity. He was banished from his garden home and the peace and rest he had hitherto enjoyed with his wife and Maker was replaced with bitterness and repining; he would now have to labor for his food by the sweat of his brow, and the battle against sin would be a lifelong exercise.

This emergency did not take heaven by surprise. The divine counsel had made provision for Adam's fall. The human race would have another opportunity with Christ, the second Adam and promised Seed, at its head. By retracing Adam's steps and gaining the victory over sin and the devil, Christ would recover all that was lost by Adam and "much more." The promised rest and the final inheritance of the earth made new were all part of the well-laid plan of salvation envisioned before the foundation of the world.

Angels were astonished to behold the love that compelled Christ to lay aside His divinity, His heavenly crown and scepter, and become a man, a humble servant, to live out His life as we do, to suffer and be tempted as we are, and die--even the death of the cross--a role so repugnant that it seemed it had shut Him away forever from His Father's presence. Christ the Sin Bearer would experience the second death in order to save man from it.

The everlasting covenant of peace provided for the salvation of man but was not dependent upon man's promises for its fulfillment.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, Who *will* have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4). The Greek word for *will* in the aforementioned passage is *thelo*, and it means "to will, have in mind, intend; to be resolved or determined, to purpose; to desire, to wish; to love; to take delight in, have pleasure" (Interlinear definition).

The everlasting covenant was God's determined plan to save all men of which Paul spoke thus: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). Our world was the one lost sheep. Christ would go in pursuit of that one lost sheep and recover all that Adam lost and more.

There was only one thing that could possibly subvert God's purpose that "all men" "be saved," and that was the will of man. Somehow, He would need to devise not only a lifeboat capable of saving the entire human race, but He would need to convince us, without coercion, to stay in the boat (in Christ)! The promise of a Savior to come and the revelation of the love of Christ as revealed on the cross would prove to be heaven's most persuasive means of revealing both the malignity of sin and the love of God for us all.

### **The Covenant with Noah**

After more than 1,500 years of sin on planet earth, wickedness had become so prevalent that God told Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for

the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:13). Beginning with the antediluvian race, Satan worked to deface the image of God in man until there were only eight believers left. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8), because "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

God had pledged Himself to save the human race before the foundation of the world. In keeping with this promise, He revealed to Noah a way of escape from the coming judgment.

In his book *The Everlasting Covenant*, E.J. Waggoner notes: " 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Genesis 2:15). 'Eden' means delight, pleasure; the garden of delight; the Hebrew word which in this place is rendered 'put' is a word meaning rest; it is the word from which the proper name Noah comes (for the signification, see Genesis 5:29, and margin); therefore Genesis 2:15 may be rendered thus: **'And the Lord God took the man, and caused him to rest in the garden of delight to dress it and to keep it.'**

"Man entered into rest, because he entered into God's perfect, finished work. He was God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before prepared, that he should walk in them. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe,' (2 John 6:29) and it was solely by faith that Adam could enjoy God's work and share His rest; for as soon as he disbelieved God, taking the word of Satan instead, he lost everything. He had no power in himself, for he was but dust of the ground, and he could retain his rest and his inheritance only as long as he allowed God to work in him 'both to will and to do of His good pleasure' " (E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, pp. 438, 439, orig. edition).

Noah and his family entered the ark by faith in the promises of God. Noah was a great preacher of righteousness. For 120 years he lived out his faith by building the ark as God had commanded. All might have entered, but unbelief stood in the way. "[God] works by His word to uphold that which He created in the beginning; so those who have believed God, and have therefore entered into rest, are exhorted to 'be careful and maintain good works;' but as those good works were obtained by faith, and 'not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves,' (Titus 3:5) so they are to be maintained by faith; but faith gives rest, and therefore the rest of God is compatible with and necessarily accompanied by, the greatest activity" (ibid., p. 439).

Five hundred years later, God would again check earth's wickedness in the destruction of the cities of the plain. The plea was made to spare Sodom for



ten righteous persons. The Lord could not find even 10 left in that city, nor were ten believers left on the earth prior to the flood. Had the antediluvians responded to the message of righteousness by faith preached by Noah, the earth might have been spared the horrific consequences of the flood. Righteousness could have covered the earth and the reign of sin could have ended long before now.

Every succeeding covenant promise which God made to man was based on the everlasting covenant -- His plan to give him rest and restore to him his lost inheritance. And thus, early in Bible history we see a pattern emerge of God calling a people out from the world and the pleasures of sin to enter His rest. In every generation a remnant has responded to this appeal. Had the Lord not provided a way of salvation for the remnant of Noah's generation, the human race would have been lost in its infancy.

It should be kept in mind that as additional covenant promises are made throughout the Scripture, they are simply the unfolding of God's everlasting covenant of salvation adapted to the conditions of each ensuing generation.

The everlasting covenant encompasses the whole great controversy, and its promised fulfillment will not be fully realized until the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven after the millennium and the earth is finally restored to its Edenic beauty. With this in mind, we find some interesting parallels between the days of Noah and the final destruction of the wicked.

During the flood "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened . . . . So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in. . . . The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters" (Genesis 7:11, 16, 18). God shut the door of the ark. Only those inside were saved.

At the end of the millennium after the wicked have been raised from the dead, Satan marshals them all to battle against God and His people. Once again God ushers His people into the safety of the walls of the New Jerusalem and the gates are shut. With "Satan at their head, the multitude move on. Kings and warriors follow close after Satan, and the multitude follow after in companies. Each company has its leader, and order is observed as they march over the broken surface of the earth to the Holy City. Jesus closes the gates of the city, and this vast army surround it, and place themselves in battle array, expecting a fierce conflict" (Story of Redemption, p. 420).



Following the revelation of Jesus and the great controversy, the wicked turn on Satan. "His own work must condemn him. **Satan** had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver **unmasked**." GC 498.2.

"The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God, on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause . . . . The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears" (Story of Redemption, p. 425). The wicked see the nail prints in the hands of Jesus, tokens of the everlasting covenant of peace. He died to save all, including them, and they despised this most precious gift.

In mercy God cleanses the earth once again, but not with water: "Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that 'shall burn as an oven.' Malachi 4:1. . . . The earth's surface seems one molten mass--a vast, seething lake of fire" (Story of Redemption, pp. 428, 429). Sin and sinners are no more.

"While the earth is wrapped in the fire of God's vengeance, the righteous abide safely in the Holy City. . . . While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield. (Psalms 84:11)" (Story of Redemption, p. 429).

As God provided an ark to save Noah, his family, and the animals, from the flood waters, so the Holy City will be a refuge for the saved.

Following the earth's cleansing by fire, its ruined surface will be recreated in its Eden glory, and the redeemed will at last enter the promised rest of the everlasting covenant. As the rainbow serves as a reminder of God's covenant not to destroy the world by water a second time, so in the New Earth a rainbow will encircle God's throne, a perpetual reminder of the everlasting covenant fulfilled.

*~Patti Guthrie*