

The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant ***"All Future Generations"***

Lesson #3 for April 17, 2021

Scriptures: Genesis 3:6; 6:5,8,11,18; 9:12-17; Isaiah 4:3; Revelation 12:17.

1. Bacteria are ... organisms too small to see without a microscope. Even after being magnified 1,000 times, a single, common round bacterium appears no larger than a pencil point. Given favorable conditions for growth—sufficient warmth, moisture, and food—bacteria multiply at an extremely rapid rate. For example, some bacteria reproduce by simple fission: a mature cell simply splits into two daughter cells. When fission takes place every hour, one bacterium can produce more than 16 million new bacteria in 24 hours. At the end of 48 hours, hundreds of billions of bacteria will have appeared.

This microscopic phenomenon in the natural world illustrates the rapid growth of evil after the Fall. Gifted with giant intellects, robust health, and longevity, this virile race forsook God and prostituted their rare powers to the pursuit of iniquity in all forms. While bacteria may be exterminated by sunlight, chemicals, or high temperatures, God chose to check this rampant rebellion by a universal flood.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, April 10.

2. What kind of people lived before the flood? What were their skills? What did God say about them?

There perished in the flood greater inventions of art and human skill than the world knows of today. The arts destroyed were more than the boasted arts of today. The great gifts with which God had endowed man were perfected. There was gold and silver in abundance, and men were constantly seeking to exceed their fellow men in devices. The result was that violence was upon the earth. The Lord was forgotten. **This long-lived race were constantly devising how they might contend with the universe of heaven and gain possession of Eden.**—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*,* vol. 20, 195.1.† [Written August 23, 1898, from "Sunnyside," Cooranbong, Australia.] [Who do you think inspired that idea? What kept them out of that garden?][‡]

3. What can we learn from the story of Noah? Why would God choose to destroy the world? What could we learn from studying God's promise to Noah after the flood?

Genesis 6:5-7: ⁵ When the LORD saw how wicked everyone on earth was and how evil their thoughts were all the time, ⁶**he was sorry that he had ever made them and put them on the earth. He was so filled with regret ⁷that he said, "I will wipe out these people I have created, and also the animals and the birds, because I am sorry that I made any of them."**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 6:5-7). New York: American Bible Society.†

4. **How could a God with foreknowledge be sorry that He made all the creatures on this earth?** The truth about freedom and sin had to be fully demonstrated. In the great controversy, God has to prove His fairness and demonstrate the results of His plans and the results of Satan's plans. God was sorry to have to do this even before creating Satan.
5. God had to take action quickly because truth was rapidly losing its hold on the world. **When the flood came, God had only one man and his family that were willing to get into/on the ark. If God had waited for another generation or so, there would have been no one paying any attention to God!** This earth would have been the kingdom of Satan!
6. From God's original date of creation when everything was proclaimed "very good," look at

what happened to the world! Transgression and rebellion had become so widespread that even God, loving, compassionate, and forgiving as He is, could not allow it to continue. Why did things go so bad so quickly?

Genesis 3:6: The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it.—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 3:11-13: ¹¹ “Who told you that you were naked?” God asked. “Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?”

¹² The man answered, “The woman you put here with me gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

¹³ The LORD God asked the woman, “Why did you do this?”

She replied, “The snake tricked me into eating it.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 4:5: But he [God] rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Genesis 4:8: Then Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out in the fields.” When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him.—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 4:19: Lamech had two wives, Adah and Zillah.—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 4:23: Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to me: I have killed a young man because he struck me.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 6:1-2: ¹ Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the **sons of God** saw the **daughters of men**, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.—*The New King James Version*.* (1982). (Genesis 6:1–2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.†

Genesis 6:5,11-12: ⁵ When the LORD saw how wicked everyone on earth was and how evil their thoughts were all the time,... ¹¹ but everyone else was evil in God’s sight, and violence had spread everywhere. ¹² God looked at the world and saw that it was evil, for the people were all living evil lives.—*Good News Bible*.*

7. Obviously, these conditions by the time of Noah did not arise in a vacuum. Try to imagine what the beings in heaven were thinking as they watched things going from bad to worse.

Apparently Satan’s power was growing; his warfare against heaven was becoming more and more determined. **A crisis had been reached** [just before Jesus birth]. **With intense interest God’s movements were watched by the heavenly angels.** Would He come forth from His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity? Would He send fire or flood to destroy them? All heaven waited the bidding of their Commander to pour out the vials of wrath upon a rebellious world. **One word from Him, one sign, and the world would have been destroyed. The worlds unfallen would have said, “Amen. Thou art righteous, O God, because Thou hast exterminated rebellion.”**—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* August 27, 1902, par. 4.†† Compare RC 58.4.

8. What was happening in the throne room of heaven? Did God discuss what He was going to do with the beings there? Of course, God’s government is completely transparent!
9. It must have seemed obvious to the beings in the universe that God must somehow eliminate

sin. But, how could He get rid of sin? That is what God's plan of salvation is all about!

Romans 8:3: What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like sinful human nature, **to do away with sin.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

10. What did God do to get rid of sin? God, through Jesus Christ, demonstrated not only the beauty and holiness of living according to God's plan, but also the results of being separated from God—the second death. Jesus is the only Person, so far, to die that second death.

11. Let us focus again on Noah.

Genesis 6:9: Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.—*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*.^{*} (1989). (Genesis 6:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.[†]

12. How do you suppose Noah remained a “righteous man,” “blameless”? How did he “walk with God” in that vile and rebellious environment? Did he try to stay away from other people? Did any of them want to get rid of him?

13. In 2 Peter 2:5, Peter called Noah a preacher of righteousness. Did Noah's preaching irritate his sinful peers?

Genesis 6:8: But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.—*The New King James Version*.^{*}

14. What is grace? This is the first occurrence of the word *grace* in the Bible. Did Noah—who was blameless, righteous, and walking with God—need grace? Let us never forget that Noah, like the rest of us, was also a sinner.

15. How would the Bible writers, even God Himself, describe your life? Would you be described as “righteous, blameless, walking with God”? What might a righteous, blameless walk with God look like in today's world?

Genesis 6:18: [God said to Noah:] “But I will establish **my covenant** with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.”—*New Revised Standard Version*.^{*†‡}

16. Look at this verse carefully. Here, we have the basics of the biblical covenant that God makes with all humanity. God simply enters into a covenant agreement with us. But, there is more to this covenant than first meets the eye. Notice first, obedience is involved. In order to participate in the blessings, they had to get on the boat.

17. Notice also that God calls it *my covenant*. What does that tell us about the covenant? Even though our behavior is required, God is the one who makes the promises. Contrast this:

Exodus 19:8: Then all the people answered together, “We will do everything that the LORD has said,” and Moses reported this to the LORD.—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [Compare Exodus 24:3,7.][‡]

18. Even though that declaration was accompanied by the giving of the Ten Commandments and that marvelous manifestation on the top of Mount Sinai, less than six weeks later they were dancing drunk and naked around a fertility cult symbol that they had “coerced” Aaron into making for them! Clearly, our promises to obey God amount to nothing compared to God's promises to us.

19. Does God get any benefit from this covenant? Only the chance to bring a few of us to heaven to live with Him forever.

Isaiah 53:11: [The LORD said:] “After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain.
My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased,

will bear the punishment of many
and for his sake I will forgive them.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

20. God is willing to forgive everyone. (See Luke 23:34: “Jesus said, ‘Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing.’”—*Good News Bible*.*) Many Christians believe that the Father is a stern, unforgiving Judge and that if it were not for the constant pleading of Jesus on our behalf, we would all be lost. That totally unbiblical view is pagan and satanic. See John 3:16; 16:25-27; etc.

John 16:25-27: ²⁵ “I [Jesus] have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, **but will speak to you plainly about the Father.** ²⁶When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I **do not say** that I will ask him on your behalf, ²⁷**for the Father himself loves you. He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.**”—*Good News Bible*.*† [Italic type is added for emphasis.]†

21. **The Father loves us just as much as Jesus does!**

22. Think of it like this. Someone falls overboard from a boat in the middle of a storm. Another person grabs a life preserver and throws it out to him, and then, hauls him back into the boat. The one who really has to work is the one who throws the life preserver; but, the one who is rescued must hang onto the life preserver. What can that teach us about God’s grace and our response?

23. And what happened after the flood? What can we learn from the story of the rainbow?

Genesis 9:12-13: ¹²God 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:** ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”—*New Revised Standard Version*.*†

24. There are not many natural phenomena that are as colorful as a rainbow. In some places where the rain is fairly heavy and the sun is bright, one can actually see a double rainbow. They are so beautiful that some groups have taken the rainbow as a symbol for their organizations.

25. So, what was God’s original plan with the rainbow?

Genesis 9:12-17: ¹² [God said:] “As a sign of **this everlasting covenant** which I am making with you and with all living beings, ¹³**I am putting** my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of **my covenant** with the world. ¹⁴Whenever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, ¹⁵I will remember **my promise** to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. ¹⁶When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember **the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth.** ¹⁷That is the sign of **the promise** which I am making to all living beings.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

26. But, the rainbow is very different from a normal covenant. We do not have to do anything to benefit from the rainbow except to look. Of course, if we take advantage of God’s promise given to us with the rainbow, then God does the saving. But, the rainbow itself is given to every living creature of all flesh **for all future generations.** (Genesis 9:15,12)

27. From this we can learn that God’s forgiveness is like that as well. We are all forgiven; but, we do not all realize it, and we certainly do not all take advantage of God’s offer.

28. By giving the rainbow, God has promised never to destroy the whole world with a flood. That is one serious problem that we can stop worrying about! What else should we learn from the rainbow?

29. What are we told about the conclusion to the flood?

Genesis 7:23: He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah **was left**, and those that were with him in the ark.—*Revised Standard Version*.^{*†}

Genesis 7:23: So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark **remained alive**.—*The New King James Version*.^{*†§}

30. Notice, for the first time, God mentioned what might be called a *remnant*, those who were **left** and **remained alive**.

31. *Remnant* is a key word in many passages of Scripture.

Genesis 45:7: [Joseph said to his brothers:] “And God sent me before you to preserve for you **a remnant** on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.”—*Revised Standard Version*.^{*†‡}

Isaiah 4:3: And **he who is left** in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, every one who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem—*Revised Standard Version*.^{*†}

Isaiah 11:11: In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time **to recover the remnant** which is left of his people.—*Revised Standard Version*.^{*†}

32. So, what is the relationship between *remnant* and *covenant*? God, in effect, became the Judge for the entire world. Those who got on the boat were saved; those who did not were lost. We need to remember, however, that this was not the final judgment of any of those people. That final judgment was to come thousands of years later in the pre-advent judgment which is happening now. There may have been some people who wanted to get on the boat but could not because they were prevented by others. But, what we know is that it was Noah and his family who got on/in. And so, God promised that special relationship with Noah and his family. (Genesis 6:18)

33. Do any verses come to mind that would suggest that what happened in Noah’s day might be similar to what will happen at the end of this world’s history?

Matthew 24:37: [Jesus said:] “The coming of the Son of Man will be like what happened in the time of Noah.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

Revelation 12:17: The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to fight against **the rest of her descendants**, all those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

34. **To get a wonderful picture of many of the details of the flood and what happened before and after the flood, read *Patriarchs and Prophets* pages 90-110.**

The rainbow, a natural physical phenomenon, was a fitting symbol of God’s promise never to destroy the earth again by a flood. Inasmuch as the climatic conditions of the earth would be completely different after the Flood, and rains would in most parts of the world take the place of the former beneficent dew to moisten the soil, something was needed to quiet men’s fears each time rain began to fall. The spiritual mind can see in natural phenomena God’s revelations of Himself (see Rom. 1:20). Thus the rainbow is evidence to the believer that the rain will bring blessing and not universal destruction.—Article on Genesis 9:15. In F. D. Nichol (Ed.), *The SDA Bible Commentary*,* vol. 1,

35. There are/have been many cultures in the world that have/have had flood stories. One of the very famous ones is known as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

“In those days, the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, ‘The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel.’ So the gods agreed to exterminate man.”—“The Story of the Flood.” In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. N. K. Sanders (London: The Penguin Group, 1972), p. 108. —[as quoted in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, April 16].^{§†}

36. Compare this reason for the flood to the reason given in the Bible. Was the flood actually a rescue of God’s last “contact” on this rebellious planet, Noah and his family, so that God would not completely lose touch with the human race?
37. Why are the truths of salvation generally unpopular? Consider these verses.

John 3:17-21: ¹⁷ [Jesus said:] “For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

¹⁸ “Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God’s only Son.

¹⁹**This is how the judgement works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.** ²⁰**All those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up.** ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

John 7:47-48: ⁴⁷ “Did he fool you, too?” the Pharisees asked them. ⁴⁸ “Have you ever known one of the authorities or one Pharisee to believe in him?”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

John 12:42-43: ⁴² Even then, many of the Jewish authorities believed in Jesus; but because of the Pharisees they did not talk about it openly, so as not to be expelled from the synagogue. ⁴³They loved human approval rather than the approval of God.—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [But, see Acts 6:7 and Acts 15:5.][†]

James 4:4: Unfaithful people! Don’t you know that to be the world’s friend means to be God’s enemy? People who want to be the world’s friends make themselves God’s enemies.—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [In the end, there will be only two groups.][†]

38. Think of some other issues involved with the story of Noah. Who paid for all the materials and all the workman to build that huge boat? As far as we know, there was no form of monetary exchange used in Noah’s day; but, they were very “advanced.” Did people volunteer to help?

This symbol [the rainbow] in the clouds was to confirm the belief of all, and establish their confidence in God, for it was a token of divine mercy and goodness to man. That although God had been provoked to destroy the earth by the flood, yet his mercy still encompasseth the earth. God says, when he looketh upon the bow in the cloud he will [75] remember. He would not have us understand that he would ever forget; but **he speaks to man in his own language**, that man may better understand him.—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, * vol. 3, 74.1-75.0 (1864).^{†‡} Compare *Signs of the Times*, March 6, 1879, par.11; SR 71.1. Also compare 1SP 78.0; AG 159.2.

39. It might be easier for us to understand that statement when considering this.

Men before the Flood lived many hundreds of years, and **when one hundred years old they were considered but youths....** They came upon the stage of action from the ages of sixty to one hundred years, about the time those who now live ... have passed off the stage.—Ellen G. White, *Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1089.9.[†]

“The statement in Genesis 6:18, though brief, contains profound concepts. It predicts provisions for the future of humankind. In establishing this covenant with the one to survive the Flood with his family, God dispenses His bountiful grace and mercy. Humankind’s security in the present and assurance of salvation in the future arise out of God’s grace and the divine action in their behalf.”—Gerhard F. Hasel and Michael G. Hasel, *The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant*, p. 29.—[as quoted in the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40].^{†§}

40. For those of us who understand something of how a rainbow is formed by the sun shining through raindrops like a prism, it might be dismissed as a simple, but beautiful, phenomenon. But, rainbows are mentioned elsewhere in very special places.

Ezekiel 1:26-28: ²⁶ Above the dome there was something that looked like a throne made of sapphire, and sitting on the throne was a figure that looked like a human being. ²⁷The figure seemed to be shining like bronze in the middle of a fire. It shone all over with a bright light ²⁸that had in it all the colours of the rainbow. This was the dazzling light that shows the presence of the LORD.—*Good News Bible*.*

Then a **rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God**, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the **symbol of God’s covenant** and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 635.3-636.0.[†] [See Revelation 6:13-17 and Isaiah 33:10-16.][‡]

41. Is it really true that Noah’s family were the only ones saved in the ark? Why was only Noah left?

“The first explicit mention of a remnant in the Bible occurs in Genesis 7:23: **‘Only Noah was left**, and those that were with him in the ark’ (RSV). The word translated ‘was left’ derives from the Hebrew root *sa’ar*, of which different forms express the remnant idea in the Old Testament. . . .

“We cannot overlook the fact that the remnant who survived the first worldwide catastrophe were people of faith and trust (see Genesis 6:9 and 7:1). Because the Bible used the [Noahic] Flood as a type of the end-time destruction, this observation has much significance.”—Gerhard F. Hasel and Michael G. Hasel, *The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant*, p. 31.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40 including the italic type, the brackets, and the content in brackets].^{†§}

42. This does not mean, however, that there were not any righteous besides Noah.

Some of the carpenters he [Noah] employed in building the ark, believed the message, but died before the flood; others of Noah’s converts backslided.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* August 16, 1906, par. 2.[‡] Compare *Fundamentals of Christian Education* 504.2.

One man’s assertion against the wisdom of thousands! They would not credit

the warning.... Christ declares that there will exist similar unbelief concerning His second coming.... When the luxury of the world becomes the luxury of the church; when the marriage bells are chiming, and all are looking forward to many years of worldly prosperity—then, suddenly as the lightning flashes ... will come the end of their bright visions and delusive hopes.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 337.3-339.0.

43. There is a very interesting ancient story from the city of Athens. Athens was where democracy was first tried as a form of government. They invented machines for voting. One of the finest ancient men who lived there was a man by the name of Aristides. He is described as being just, kind, and fair. And guess what happened to him. The majority of the citizens of the city chose to banish him from the city because his goodness apparently contrasted too sharply with the badness of others!
44. Compare the story of Noah. We would never have known about the evil in Noah's day if we did not have the story of Noah. Think about your own experience. Are you a Noah in your society?
45. There are so many pressures for evil surrounding us. How can we possibly survive?

Romans 12:1-2: ¹So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. ²Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.—*Good News Bible*.*

46. What do you think the people in Noah's day would have done with him if they had an option? Did any of them want to kill him? Think of the stories of Canaan and Lamach. If there had been mental hospitals in Noah's day, would the people have tried to confine him to one?
47. The most important question connected with this story is **why God did what He did**.

Genesis 6:6-7: ⁶He was sorry that he had ever made them and put them on the earth. He was so filled with regret ⁷that he said, "I will wipe out these people I have created, and also the animals and the birds, because I am sorry that I made any of them."—*Good News Bible*.*

48. We believe that God has foreknowledge. Why did a God who has foreknowledge and knew in advance that all of this was coming, allow it to happen? The truth about sin and its consequences needed to be demonstrated. The great controversy was already in full swing. When the flood approached, Noah and his family were apparently the only ones left alive that were paying any attention to God.
49. So, what does that teach us about our day?
50. God has always claimed that He has/will have a group of people who remain/will remain faithful to Him no matter what happens. The 144,000 will be that group in the end. By contrast, Satan has claimed that anyone who is truly free would join his side!
51. Some people are quite disturbed by the idea of a remnant. Does it seem arrogant? Or, prejudicial? If we knew all that God has gone through to save us and our efforts at hanging onto the life preserver that God has provided, there is certainly no reason for being proud. Are we hanging on tightly?

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