

# The Biblical Covenants

We began last week to consider the theme of "Biblical Covenants". A Covenant is a binding, legal agreement or contract.

God has chosen to frame much of His dealings with man within Covenants. Most of these are 'unconditional' contracts that God has committed Himself to fulfill.

These Covenants occur at different moments in history and are like 'scene sets' on the great stage of the drama of Redemption. They bring into place the context and the setting of God's work of salvation in Christ.

Last week we saw how the Adamic Covenant puts in place the dire consequences of sin; the travail of nature; the bondage mankind; and the glorious promise of a future 'Messiah'.

## The Noahic Covenant

The Noahic Covenant comes within the context of the great flood. The earth is consumed by the wickedness of mankind (Genesis 6:5); God determines to destroy mankind and 'begin again' with Noah and his family. (Genesis 6:7).

The impact of the Flood cannot be underestimated; it is quite literally a cataclysmic event that brings into being a 'New World'

There are radical **physical changes** to the world after the flood - the outer cloud belt is gone, the light is different, the sky is blue; the floods have changed the geography to create valleys and mountains; etc.

There are radical **Spiritual changes** - the old worship system centered around Eden has now given way to something different, not yet fully revealed and explained.

In the midst of all this newness and difference - Noah does what 'he knows to be right' ... He worships God! (Genesis 8:20 - 22)

God's response to Noah's worship and sacrifice is this Covenant. It marks this new beginning ... it is reminiscent of God's words to Adam: "... *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Gen. 9:1).

## The Main Features of this Covenant

- It is a sovereign, unconditional Covenant
- It has the widest recipient list (Noah, all living things and the earth)
- It is a Covenant that will be in force until the End
- It is a Covenant with a 'sign' - the Rainbow
- It is a Covenant seeks to put things back in order

### 1. The Creator - reaffirms His gracious attitude toward mankind ... *"be fruitful"*

So much had become distorted before and during the flood. This event brought no pleasure to the heart of God. Here again is His fundamental blessing on mankind - 'be fruitful'

### 2. Leadership - God puts Mankind over nature ... *"Into your hand they are delivered"*

It is not the same as it was with Adam, now there is 'fear', now animals are food. (Maybe the new climatic conditions required a new style of diet with more protein?)

### 3. Judicial Order - *"I will require a reckoning"*

In contrast to the lawless society that prevailed before the flood God establishes some basic Judicial process; life must be revered; and if one kills there should be a reckoning.

### 4. Natural Order - *"I have set my bow in the cloud"*

God commits to never flood or curse the world again in this way again. The full implications of this are more fully explained in Genesis 8:21 - 22

*"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."*

This is an amazing Covenant and it comes to us from an amazing moment in human history. It should be remembered that Jesus said that *"As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man"* (Matthew 24:37)