

## **The Rainbow**

**Fall Quarter: Covenant with God**

**Unit 1: Signs of God's Covenant**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of September 3, 2017**

**By Rev. Earnestine W. Campbell**

**Lesson Scripture: Genesis 8:20–9:17**

**Background: Genesis 8:20-22**

Key Verse: "I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth." (Genesis 9:11)

Purpose: To recognize that despite the often destructive forces of existence, God's promise of life endures.

### **Hearing the Word**

The "Adult Bible Study" fall series writer begins this quarter with a highlight of what to expect: *The Scripture readings this quarter highlight the theme of covenant. The word covenant means "agreement," "contract," or "arrangement." In Hebrew, the word for "covenant" is berith. In general, covenant denotes a bond or relationship between two parties, usually symbolized by gestures (for example, the signing of a treaty, circumcision, a handshake) and signs (for example, a rainbow, the Ten Commandments, wedding rings).*

### **Bible lesson**

#### **Covenant Models**

The Hebrew Scriptures include a myriad of examples of "covenant-making." We see that the covenantal agreements have been a part of relationships and culture for ages. The writer uses the following Scriptural texts as examples:

- Malachi alluded to the reference of a covenant between a husband and a wife when God would no longer accept the sacrificial offerings of corrupt priests (Malachi 2:14). The writer mentions that some scholars have suggested that the marriage agreement was the historical foundation for all subsequent "social and political covenant-making."
- David and Jonathan: Example of "friendship" covenant. (1 Samuel 18:3-4).
- Solomon, Hiram, Abner, and David: Example of covenant between "rulers." (2 Samuel 3:12-21; 1 Kings 5:12).
- Israelites and the indigenous animals: Example of covenant of "safety." (Hosea

- 2:18).
- Unwise attempt to form a political alliance with Egypt: example of covenant of “destruction.” (Isaiah 28:15, NRSV)

Teacher: Have class members to recall a relational covenant, past or present. What was the experience or outcome? Have them share aloud with class members if comfortable.

### **God’s Covenant “Never Again”**

Genesis 8:20-22: “Noah built an altar to the Lord. He took some of the clean large animals and some of the clean birds, and placed entirely burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the pleasing scent, and the Lord thought to himself, I will not curse the fertile land anymore because of human beings since the ideas of the human mind are evil from their youth. I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done. As long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and hot, summer and autumn, day and night will not cease.”

We see in this story that God made a covenant of “protection” before the destruction with Noah, for him, his family and the animals. The second covenant is after the destruction that the writer coins as, “Never Again,” between God and Noah and ultimately humanity (Genesis 8:20-22). This covenant is another “protection” covenant that He would “Never Again” flood the earth. God’s destruction of the land, humanity, and the animals were a response to the sinful ways of the people. He was very disappointed in the people and grieved. We see in verse 22 that God, however, had a change of heart about using this kind of force ever again. The writer says that the Genesis narrator of the Flood “was restrained, not explicitly mentioning the sheer terror of the event. The account does not detail the destructive natural powers God unleashed, unlike the descriptive vigor of the psalmist.” (Psalm 18:11, 14-15, NRSV). The writer also raises another aspect not revealed in the text, the emotional aspect of Noah and his family while in the ark. These points of conditions and others are left to the imagination of the reader.

Teacher: Ask, when has force been used on individuals, groups or in engagements? Was it judicious, or would it have been beneficial to use other methods?

### **God’s Covenant “With All Life”**

#### **Post Destruction and Reconciliation**

Genesis 9:1-7. The writer says this section is God setting the stage for the new creation and His covenant with all the living things. The narrator of the text reminds humanity that we are made in the image of God, as well as the blessing and a command to be fertile and multiply. God restores the order, structure, and promise of hope and the future. The story

conveys that God is ready to give humanity another chance just as He gives today to all that is willing to repent.

Verses 8-17. The writer concludes by characterizing the final section of the Flood story as consisting of four speeches by God: The first three (verses 1-7, 8-11, 12-16) were directed to Noah and his sons, and the last one (verse 17), to Noah alone. In the second speech (verses 8-11), God introduced a covenant with all that lived and would live in the world.

Teacher: Ask persons to identify from the concluding verses (8-17), the last four speeches of God. What emphases are the texts conveying? What is their interpretation of what God is conveying? Review the Bible Concordance for supporting texts.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, guide us as we maneuver through difficult choices and challenges, and let us choose correctly according to your will so that we may live a sin-free life. Amen.

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*The Adult Bible Studies, Series Fall 2017 book is used for the content of this lesson.*