

God Keeps His Promises

(Genesis 9:1-17)

What is a Covenant? Boice writes, “**A covenant is a promise.** It has been defined more elaborately, of course—and rightly so. The great Princeton theologian Charles Hodge defines it as ‘a promise suspended upon a condition, and attached to disobedience a certain penalty.’ O. Palmer Robertson calls it ‘a bond in blood sovereignly administered.’ These definitions are right, but basically a covenant is a promise of God to people with whom he is dealing in a special way.”¹

1. The **Substance** of the Covenant (9:1-7)

A. Life will be **propagated** (9:1, 7)

“...be fruitful and multiply...”

B. Life will be **provided** for (9:2-4)

It seems that men and women were vegetarians before the Flood. Here the Bible says animal food is permitted (not required) to sustain life.

Jesus taught that it was permissible to eat all foods (Mark 7:1–23), and both Peter (Acts 10) and Paul (1 Tim. 4:3–4; Col. 2:16) reaffirmed this truth.²

C. Life will be **protected** (9:5-6)

Capital punishment is established in this verse because mankind is made “in the image of God.” Life is so precious to God that the intentional taking of another person’s life must be severely punished.

Romans 13:1-5 includes the idea: “[H]e is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (v.4).

Martin Luther writes, “God establishes government and gives it the sword to hold wantonness in check, lest violence and other sins proceed without limit.”³

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 333–334.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Basic*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1998), 116.

³ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 2, 241.

James Montgomery Boice writes, "Is the wickedness of man due to the lack of proper threats and penalties? Can the death penalty (and other lesser penalties) end crime? God puts it to the test. He grants the power... There are two errors that people tend to make in regard to human government. **One is disregard for the state.** It is a refusal to recognize its authority, expressed in a scorn of public leaders and a flaunting of perfectly valid laws. This is what Paul is primarily dealing with in Romans. **The other error is to regard the state more highly than we ought, believing that the government will solve our problems.**"⁴

Anne Graham Lotz explains, "The principle of capital punishment was not given primarily as a deterrent to crime but out of God's demand for reverence of Him and respect for man, because human life is made 'in the image of God.' In eighteenth-century England, it was a felony to deface a coin bearing the king's image. Defacing the coin was considered to be so disrespectful and dishonoring to the king it cost the life of the person who did it. If it was a felony to deface the coin with the king's image, how could it be considered less serious to deface the image of God by willfully taking another person's life?"⁵

2. The **Security** of the Covenant (9:8-11)

God promised to never flood the entire world with a flood again.

We can trust that God fulfills His promises (1 Kings 8:56, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Jeremiah 1:12, Numbers 23:19)

3. The **Sign** of the Covenant (9:12-17)

Von Rad observes that the bow [qeset] is the same word for the regular battle bow, and so it makes the vivid description of what was going on: God hung up His "battle bow" to be a sign of peace.⁶

"Rainbows are the result of well-known physics. When light enters at an angle into a substance where it travels more slowly, different wavelengths are bent differently. This effect is called **dispersion**. Since color depends on wavelength, we see this dispersion as a band of different colors. The shorter wavelengths (violet and blue) are bent the most, the longer wavelengths (red and orange) are bent the least. The



great creation physicist Sir Isaac Newton experimented on dispersion by glass prisms. His experiments demonstrated **color is a property of the light itself; colored objects don't generate color, but rather, absorb or reflect light that is already colored...** "[W]e see colored bands because of the design of our color vision. Newton designated seven colors to the rainbow by analogy with the seven notes of the musical scale: **red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet**, hence the mnemonic initialism **ROYGBIV**...

"Also, dispersion can be produced, as we know, from raindrops. Here, the light is also reflected, so we see rainbows only if we are between the sun and the raindrops. The light refracts first when it enters the raindrop, and then reflects internally from the concave surface on the opposite, and finally leaves the drop, so two refractions and one reflection."⁷

Today, God has established a new covenant for us in Christ (Hebrews 8:1-13; 10:1-19). He symbolizes that covenant through the bread and juice, representing the body and blood of Jesus.

⁴ Boice, 381-382.

⁵ Anne Graham Lotz, *God's Story* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 221.

⁶ Allen Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 206.

⁷ Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 612-613.