

# Keeper of the Covenant

Genesis 8:13~9:17

Lent 1—March 4, 2020

## Introduction

There was a type of treaty used in the Ancient world called the **Suzerain Treaty** or covenant. It was written by a conquering king for the people he had just conquered. Its form went this way: *“Since I have conquered you, I will be your king and you will be my people. As my subjects, you shall do this and that. In return for your loyalty, I will see that laws are administered, and you are protected from outside enemies.”* This covenant was unilateral, the terms being determined solely by the king. It was non-negotiable. The **Sinai Covenant** is a form of this Suzerain covenant. In **Exodus 20**, God says that He is Israel’s God who brought them out of Egypt. This gives Him the right to make this covenant. Through the **10 Commandments** He tells them how they are to live. He explains this throughout the rest of the Torah. In **Deuteronomy**, He tells them that if they **follow** His Law, they will have **life**, if **not**, they will **perish**. His covenant with Noah is different. While He does give them some laws, God’s actions are not conditional on the actions of man. We want to explore that covenant here today.

## A Covenant of Life

All creatures need water to live. But too much water means death. That’s what a flood is all about. Land animals can’t breathe under water. If plants are covered with water for an extended period of time, they will die. In fact, what all life needs to survive is balance. This is what **verse 22** is about. You must have both **seedtime** and **harvest**, **cold** and **heat**, **summer** and **winter**, **day** and **night** for life to continue. God has caused the death of all land creatures as a judgment against the evils of man. He has upset this precious balance with too much water. God now promises to retain the balance needed for life.

## A Covenant of Blood

God **does** lay down **some** laws for man. He gives all living things into the hand of man for food. The only condition He makes concerns **blood**. Man is not to eat flesh with the blood in it. The blood is where **life** is and drinking blood was taboo for God’s people. God also instituted **capital punishment**. If a man *sheds the blood* of another human, *his blood shall be shed by man*. This is because God is the Creator of life and made man in His own image. So, He is the only One who has the right to take life away.

## A Covenant of Grace

As I said earlier, God’s fulfilling of the covenant isn’t based on human actions. He says in **verse 21** that *the intentions of man’s heart are always toward evil*. He could never promise to spare the earth, if it was up to man. He knows how bad it’s going to get. If it depended on man’s behavior, God would be forced to repeat His actions here.

## The Sign of the Covenant

Then God establishes a sign for His covenant—a rainbow. *“I have set my bow in the cloud” (Genesis 9:13)*. The Hebrew word here is the word for the bow of a warrior. God is hanging up His weapon. No longer will he go to war against man and destroy the world for his sin. Does God still use nature to bring judgment? Some point to hurricane Katrina and say it was God’s judgment against the “Big Easy”, New Orleans, for her decadent lifestyle. Was she that much worse than other U.S. cities? Also, it could be seen this way: New Orleans is below sea level. Over the years, they have been given funds to keep improving the levees to where they could withstand a category 5 hurricane. Instead, their government misappropriated these funds and put them toward tourism. All our actions have consequences.

## A New Covenant

God has made a **new** covenant with us. It’s a covenant of **life**, for it’s a covenant of **salvation** and the **promise** of eternal life. It’s a covenant of **blood**, because it’s based in the **blood of Jesus**. It’s a covenant of **grace**, because it’s not based on anything we do, but on His gracious **love** and **forgiveness**. And He has given us a **sign** of this covenant. The sign is **bread and wine**. When we receive the bread and wine at Communion, we are receiving the **body and blood** of Christ. Earlier, God gave the command not to drink blood, because that’s the source of life. But we **are commanded** to drink **Christ’s blood**, because that’s the source of **eternal** life. This bread and wine, containing the body and blood of Christ, remind us that, totally by God’s grace, we are forgiven and will live with Him forever. He is the **Keeper of the covenant**.

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*May the peace of God,  
Which passes all understanding,  
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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