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May God draw you closer to the fullness of life with Him through this book.

God’s blessings to you,

Adonijah Okechukwu Ogbonnaya

Adonijah Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, Advanced Teachers’ Certificate, B.A. Bible and Philosophy, M.A. Theological Studies, M.A. Religion, Ph.D. Theology and Personality
Editor
Lewis Latimer
(September 4, 1848–December 11, 1928)

Remember the name Lewis Latimer whenever you use an electric light. Born in 1848 in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Lewis was the youngest of four children. His parents, George and Rebecca, were escaped slaves from Virginia who had run away to gain their freedom. They finally settled in Boston, but their owner came to bring them back to his plantation in Virginia. Local abolitionists raised funds to pay for their freedom, which became a famous case related to the abolition of slavery.

Latimer served in the Union Navy during the Civil War, and in the rank of landsman, he did unskilled labor aboard the ship. After gaining an honorable discharge, Latimer was employed as an office worker with the patent law firm Crosby, Halstead, and Gould. This job would only earn him $3 a week. Soon he learned how to use a set square, ruler, and other tools, which helped him gain a foundation in draftsmanship. When his employer discovered his penchant for sketch drawings, he made Latimer the head draftsman, giving him a weekly salary of $20.

Soon after this, Latimer married Mary Wilson Lewis from Providence, Rhode Island. Eventually, instead of just drawing other people’s inventions, Latimer began his own inventions. In 1874, he invented improved toilets for railroad cars. Over time, he became a draftsman at Alexander Graham Bell’s patent law firm, and in 1876, Bell employed him to draft the drawings so that the telephone could receive a patent.

Latimer is best known for his invention of a carbon filament used in light bulbs. Although now we use tungsten, at the time Latimer’s carbon filaments lasted longer than the paper ones used by Thomas Edison. Along with these inventions, Latimer received patents for a cooling and disinfecting apparatus, a locking rack for hats, coats, umbrellas, and book supports. Latimer was also hired to oversee the installation of electrical street lighting in Montreal, London, New York City, and Philadelphia.

This creative and prolific inventor lived his final years in Flushing, New York, where he taught classes and offered services for soliciting patents. He published a book of poetry before his death in 1928. Latimer was part of the group known as the Edison Pioneers, who said about him: “Broadmindedness, versatility in the accomplishment of things intellectual and cultural, a linguist, a devoted husband and father, all were characteristic of him, and his genial presence will be missed from our gatherings.”

Source:
Words You Should Know
A. Curse (Genesis 8:21) qalal (Heb)—To make despicable, to curse.
   B. Perpetual (9:12) olam (Heb.)—Eternal, lasting, continuance.

Teacher Preparation
Unifying Principle—Making a Promise. After tragedy strikes, people have possibilities to seek renewed hope and strength to rebuild their lives. Do humans have a reliable source they can turn to for rebuilding and protecting their lives? As an act of benevolence, God used the rainbow to assure Noah that neither humankind nor the earth would ever again be destroyed by water.
   A. Read the Bible Background and Devotional Readings.
   B. Pray for your students and lesson clarity.
   C. Read the lesson Scripture in multiple translations.

O—Open the Lesson
A. Begin the class with prayer.
   B. Have the students read the In Focus story.
   C. Ask students how events named in the story can weigh on their hearts and how they can view these events from a theological perspective.
   D. Have students read the Aim for Change.

P—Present the Scriptures
A. Read the Focal Verses and discuss the Background and The People, Places, and Times sections.
   B. Have class share what Scriptures jump out for them and why, with particular emphasis on today’s context.

E—Explore the Meaning
A. Use More Light on the Text to help provide more in-depth discussion of the lesson text.
   B. Discuss the Lesson in Our Society and Make It Happen sections.

N—Next Steps for Application
A. Summarize the value of God’s promises in the midst of turbulent times.
   B. End class with a commitment to pray for families, communities, and the nations.

Worship Guide
For the Superintendent and Teacher
Theme: The Rainbow
Song: “I Told the Storm”
Devotional Reading: Isaiah 54:1–10
The Rainbow

Bible Background • GENESIS 8:20–9:17
Printed Text • GENESIS 8:20–22, 9:8–17 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 54:1–10

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: COMPREHEND the rainbow as a sign of God's grace; APPRECIATE God's ability to renew our lives following difficult times; and WORSHIP God gratefully in light of His continued promises of mercy and grace.

More than ten years ago, Hurricane Katrina devastated Troy and Michelle's world. At first, they were just happy to be alive and to be together. They knew things would never be the same again. Troy and Michelle lost their home, had to leave behind all of their possessions, and both lost their jobs as a result of the storm. They couldn’t see how their lives would ever be restored. So much good from the past had been washed away in the storm. The couple moved to Houston, and with the help of a church that came to their aid, they slowly regained hope.

Troy and Michelle wondered at times whether they would be whole again, but they held on to the promises of God’s Word and believed that they would be restored and receive double for their trouble. The couple remained in constant prayer and made sure to study God’s Word to remind them of His faithfulness. At times they couldn’t see any immediate change, but they knew that God was there and that He cared for them.

Over the course of time, they were able to rebuild their careers, get a new home, and now have a nine-year-old daughter and an eight-year-old son. Troy and Michelle are careful to give God the glory for their restoration and they teach their children to trust Him.

The way in which we respond to life’s ups and downs is the key to not allowing life to control our spirit. How can God’s covenant give us hope to rebound after a loss?

Keep in Mind

“And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11).
“And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11).
Focal Verses

**KJV** Genesis 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

**NLT** Genesis 8:20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.

21 And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things.

22 As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

9:8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth

11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the
everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

17 Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

The People, Places, and Times

Noah A descendant of Seth, born to Adam and Eve after the death of Abel (Genesis 4:25). He was considered a righteous man who lived blameless before God during a wicked and perverse generation. Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 6:9–10). According to the Hebrew account, Noah and his sons were set apart to lead the rebirth of creation.

The Flood. Stories of a flood exist within several ancient cultures to explain this catastrophic event. However, the Jewish version in Genesis 6:9–17 is unique among them in how it focused on the relationship between a monotheistic God and humanity. Although retold against the backdrop of many particular cultures, each story involves the salvation of a blameless man and a woman who were left to lead the re-population of the earth.

How does the fact that the flood story exists in so many cultures inform our telling of the story to those who may not believe?

Background

As the earth’s population increased, God saw the fruit of humanity’s nature from the fall—it was constantly evil. Humanity’s sin and rebellion grieved His heart until it could no longer be tolerated. God declared that His holiness was not going to contend with His creation. However, Noah was counted as blameless before God in this wicked and perverse generation. God warned Noah of the coming wrath and judgment. He told of the deluge of water that would come to put an end to the depravity. Out of His grace, God instructed Noah to build an ark to save his wife, three sons, and their wives, as well as two animals of each kind, male and female plus animals for sacrifice. Noah did as God commanded and built an ark; God promised that He would make a covenant agreement with Noah because of his obedience and uprightness. When Noah was 600 years old, God fulfilled His prophetic word to destroy the earth by water. Noah, his family, and the animals were set apart by God as survivors.

What does it mean for us to be blameless before God in the 21st century?

At-A-Glance

1. The Perpetual Promise (Genesis 8:20–22)
2. The Promise Sealed (vv. 9:8–13)
3. The Promise Meaning (vv. 14–17)

In Depth

1. The Perpetual Promise (Genesis 8:20–22)

Noah, his family, and the animals were in the ark of safety while the rest of the earth’s inhabitants perished. God spoke to Noah directly to let him know that they could safely come out and inhabit the land. In an act of worship for God’s protection and provision, Noah built an altar to the Lord and offered a sacrifice of burnt
offerings using animals approved by Him. This act of worship was a pleasing delight to God, especially after enduring such wickedness. God’s response to this sacrifice also displays His desire to be in intimate fellowship with hearts that are aligned with Him. God makes a promise that He will never curse the ground again because of humanity’s inclination to sin.

Further, God promises that once again the earth will continue its seasonal rhythms because of His power, and that as long as it exists, it will continue to produce from the ground, supply cold and heat, change seasons, and continue the cycle of night and day. Humanity is still responsible for the earth’s care today and should be wise in using energy resources and seeking sustainable solutions for the health of the environment.

*How does God’s promise to never destroy the earth with water again give the believer hope?*

2. **The Promise Sealed (vv. 9:8–13)**

God now turns to Noah and makes a personal promise to confirm His covenant through Noah and his sons as well as those who would come after them. God also includes the animals in this promise. As a sign of His covenant agreement between Himself and His creation (which includes humanity, the animals, and the earth) for future generations, God placed a bow in the clouds. The rainbow of colors seen after a rainfall is a symbol of God’s continual love and mercy. He continues to keep His promise today that no matter how torrential and destructive storms, hurricanes, or other natural water events might be, they will not destroy the entire earth as happened with the flood. We live in fallen conditions where the earth’s natural progression produces events that we cannot fully explain, even with science, but God remains faithful to His covenant. This is how we can maintain hope in the midst of it all.

*What can we say to a person who has experienced an act of God that resulted in a loss of loved ones or property?*

3. **The Promise Meaning (vv. 14–17)**

God gives the rainbow and explains that it is a sign of His covenant. He forever seals His promise with the reminder of a rainbow. The rainbow should continue to serve as a reminder for humanity of God’s love and good character because He continues to keep His word. God places no further conditions on humanity for the fulfillment of this covenant because it is a promise He made with Himself not to allow His wrath to manifest into destruction with water. The Noahic covenant is regarded as the basis of God’s covenant relationship with all of humanity, and subsequent covenants (i.e., Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic) denote His special relationship with Israel. However, the last covenant between God and humanity supersedes them all as Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these covenants (Hebrews 8:6–13).

*How can we remind ourselves of God’s good character and His love for us?*

**Search the Scriptures**

1. Do you think the Lord’s promise to not destroy the earth with water was a response to Noah’s burnt offering? Why or why not (Genesis 8:21–22)?

2. Why was it necessary for God to give Noah and his sons a sign of the covenant (9:12–15)?

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. How should we see nature’s constants (seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, the seasons) in view of God’s mercies? Can modern science prove God’s reliability?

2. What does it mean to see the rainbow as a symbol of God’s character? How has the symbol of the rainbow changed in our world?
Lesson in Our Society

God’s Word remains constant; He continues to prove Himself as a covenant-keeping God who loves and cares for His creation. God does not seek to fight with humanity but desires that all come into repentance. Jesus Christ repairs the breach between God and the human race, and because of His blood, we can participate in the last covenant. By faith in the finished work at Calvary’s cross, and Jesus’ triumphant resurrection, we are able to receive God’s Spirit and live in unbroken fellowship with Him.

Noah’s display of faith and courage to move on God’s command and look for the promise of a new day is reminiscent of how African Americans withstood slavery and segregation until emancipation and the Civil Rights Movement. The African American church was the bedrock of communal hope. We live in perilous times where Satan and humanity’s worldly ways cause violence and depravity. When disaster happens—whether a natural or man-made disaster, financial difficulty, death, or any other devastating event—we have hope through our covenant relationship with God.

In what ways can the church use lessons from its role in the Civil Rights Movement to restore communal hope today?

Make It Happen

Christ followers can also be first responders in a time of crisis. It is an opportunity to serve those who are hurting. As you watch the news or are touched personally by some life event:

- Ask God to reveal to you symbols of His hope in today’s context.
- Examine how you can remain in faith as you experience a trial, and how you can share that hope with someone who is hurting.
- Look for opportunities to praise God in spite of challenging situations and look to glorify Him in the process.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:


Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:


More Light on the Text

Genesis 8:20–22, 9:8–17

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The institution of sacrifice seems to have continued from the time of Cain and Abel. Noah builds an altar to the Lord and makes sacrifices to worship Him and show his thanksgiving for the Lord’s protection and care. Noah is careful to sacrifice only clean animals and make whole burnt offerings on the altar as a sign of holiness and devotion.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

21
22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

The Lord smelling the savor (Heb. reach, ray-OKH) of the sacrifices signifies that God is pleased with what Noah has given as a sacrifice. This prompts the Lord to state His promise not to curse the ground because of the sin of humanity. The Lord also acknowledges the sinful nature of humanity and says that He will never again smite every living thing. While the earth remains, the rhythms and patterns of creation would remain in effect. The earth and the environment would no longer have to pay for man’s evil.

Genesis 9:8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

Divine sovereignty is in view as God took the initiative and spoke to Noah and his sons. After the destruction of the world by the Flood, Noah became the seminal head of God’s new creation because he and his family were the only ones saved from watery death. Possibly to ensure that man would not live in abject fear of Him, God spoke to Noah and made a “covenant” (Heb. berit, ber-EETH) with him. This is only the second time the word is mentioned in the Bible.

The word is thought to come from a root meaning “to cut.” This is supported by the idea of the customary covenantal sacrifice and walking between the divided parts. Other theologians have suggested that “covenant” comes from a root meaning “to eat together or have a banquet.” This is also plausible as eating was a common ancient Near Eastern way of establishing friendship. The covenant was a divine ordinance with signs and pledges, much different than our modern-day contracts. It was a binding agreement between two parties, where one party usually had higher status than the other.

Surviving the great Flood, Noah had been through an ordeal. God wanted to assure him that he could now live out his life in peace and rest. God’s anger with the world had been appeased, and humanity could now be at peace as well. God’s pledge was extended not only to Noah but also to all of his “seed” (Heb. zera’, ZEH-rah), meaning successive generations. The successive generations would encompass all of humanity as Noah and his family became ancestors of all who live on the earth, even today.

This covenant applies not only to Noah, but the rest of the animal world as well. Note that God includes the cattle (Heb. behemah, beh-hee-MAH); this word refers to any animal that lives on land, but often has the nuance of a domesticated animal such as various livestock. This is in contrast to every beast (Heb. chay, KHAH-ee), which generally refers to wild animals. God’s covenant includes all creation.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

In establishing His covenant with Noah, God made the covenant both universal and unconditional. Noah was not asked to do anything in order for the covenant to remain in force. By including every living creature in the covenant, we are reminded of God’s instructions to Adam and Eve to reproduce, multiply, and cover the earth (Genesis 1:28–30). No living thing would be cut off (Heb. karat, ka-ROT) or exterminated. The word for “cut off” is also assumed to be the root word for “covenant”;
in an interesting play on words, this could be interpreted as the Lord saying, “I will cut a covenant with you so that you will not be cut off.” Though the earth will one day be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:5–7, 10), God here promised that water will never again be the cause for the destruction of all mankind or the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

So that Noah would know that His word is good, God gave a “token” (Heb. ‘oth, OTH), meaning a distinguishing mark or miraculous sign—in this case, a sign to remind of a covenant obligation.

This sign is His “bow” (Heb. qesheth, KEH-sheth). The use of the word “bow” is significant; this use suggests a weapon. As such, this bow is God’s bow of war, but here He gives His bow a new use and a new meaning. The bow, or rainbow, will be a reminder to Him of His covenant with Noah and the earth never again to destroy it with water. The arrow that would ordinarily be pointed toward the earth is now pointed toward the heavens, as the bow rests upon the earth’s clouds.

This aspect of the narrative bears striking similarities to the Gilgamesh epic, which also tells a tale of cataclysmic flood and the goddess Ishtar basing her oath with the lapis lazuli of her necklace. Additionally, an eleventh-century Assyrian relief portrays a god holding out a hand of blessing and also a bow. These narratives from different Mesopotamian cultures, although differing in the details, show the plausibility of the universal flood account.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Nothing happens outside of God’s permissive will. God brought the cloud and determined that the rainbow would be seen in that cloud. God will see it, but man will be permitted to witness the rainbow as well. Each time we see a rainbow, we should be reminded that God has made a covenant to never again destroy the earth with a great flood. God is faithful and true to His word—a word that remains universal in its application, extending to all flesh, human and non-human. The word “remember” (Heb. zakar, zah-KAR) should not be taken to imply God’s ability to forget, but instead, it has the connotation of caring for someone or being mindful. The Lord will be mindful and care for the whole earth by keeping His covenant and not bringing the flood again.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. 17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

The rainbow usually appears when particles of moisture in a cloud interact with the rays of the sun, usually after a storm. It is comforting to know that the storm of God’s wrath that once resulted in a universal Flood will always be quieted when He looks upon His token of peace: the rainbow.

Once more God’s covenant is confirmed—the seventh time that God mentions the word “covenant” in this discourse. The number seven oftentimes represents fullness or completion. In the completeness of God’s promise, Noah
and all mankind can be assured that God is in control and mindful of all that is occurring on the earth. He will not forget.

Sources:

Say It Correctly
Descendants. di-SIN-dents.

Daily Bible Readings

**MONDAY**
Noah Found Favor with the Lord
(Genesis 6:1–8)

**TUESDAY**
People and Creatures Enter the Ark
(Genesis 7:1–10)

**WEDNESDAY**
People and Creatures Return to the Earth
(Genesis 8:13–19)

**THURSDAY**
Be Fruitful, Multiply, Fill the Earth
(Genesis 9:1–7)

**FRIDAY**
Nobody Knows the Day and Hour
(Matthew 24:36–44)

**SATURDAY**
Under the Rainbow the Angel Speaks
(Revelation 10:1–7)

**SUNDAY**
The Bow, Sign of God’s Promise
(Genesis 8:20–22, 9:8–17)

Notes