## LESSON 8

# COVENANT MERCY IN A STILL-FALLEN WORLD

*Life Protected, Promise Confirmed, and the Human Family Divided*

**MAIN IDEA** **God preserves His creation by covenant mercy, protects image-bearing human life, and carries the line of blessing forward despite the persistence of sin.**

### Lesson Objectives

- Trace the movement from renewed creation blessing to covenant promise and family division.
- Explain why the image of God grounds the protection of every human life.
- Distinguish the responsibilities of Genesis 9:1–7 from the unilateral covenant of 9:8–17.
- Interpret the bow as God's covenant sign and describe what "remember" means in context.
- Evaluate the principal interpretations of Ham's offense and Canaan's curse with appropriate humility.
- Connect Shem's line to Abraham and Christ without forcing unsupported typology.

### Teaching Overview

Genesis 9 begins with a renewed commission after the Flood and ends with Noah's death. Between those points, God protects life, pledges to preserve the earth, appoints the bow as His covenant sign, and turns the story toward Noah's sons. The chapter combines profound mercy with sober realism: the world is preserved, but the human heart is not yet made new.

### Key Scripture Passages

- Primary passage: Genesis 9:1–29.
- Main divisions: 9:1–3; 9:4–7; 9:8–11; 9:12–17; 9:18–19; 9:20–24; 9:25–29.
- Earlier Genesis connections: Genesis 1:26–30; 3:6–21; 4:8–15; 6:11–13, 18; 8:1, 20–22.
- Later Genesis connections: Genesis 10:1–32; 11:1–26; 12:1–3.
- Canonical connections: Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 17:10–14; Romans 12:19–13:4; Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3; Galatians 3:16.

## I. GOD RENEWS THE CREATION BLESSING (9:1–3)

**Scripture:** 9:1–3

#### Guided Notes

- List the creation commands repeated in this section.
- Record the continuities and discontinuities between Genesis 1 and Genesis 9.
- How does Noah function as a "second Adam"?
- What stewardship principle follows from God's provision?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** Which phrases in verses 1–3 repeat or modify Genesis 1?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** Where do you need to receive God's gifts with stewardship rather than entitlement?

## II. GOD PROTECTS LIFE AND REAFFIRMS THE DIVINE IMAGE (9:4–7)

**Scripture:** 9:4–7

### Guided Notes

- What two restrictions are marked by the repeated "but/surely"?
- Record the teacher's explanation of "I will require."
- What does the image of God contribute to verse 6?
- List the two readings of "by man," with the evidence for the preferred view.
- How does verse 7 contrast with verses 5–6?

### Vocabulary

| TERM | STUDENT NOTES |
|---|---|
| ʾak | |
| nepeš | |
| imago Dei | |

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** How does Genesis 9:6 ground human dignity differently from arguments based on usefulness, status, or ability?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** How should God-given dignity shape one concrete decision about protecting life?

## III. GOD ESTABLISHES A UNIVERSAL COVENANT (9:8–11)

**Scripture:** 9:8–11

### Guided Notes

- Who receives the covenant?
- What exactly does God promise never again to do?
- Why does the order of verses 1–17 support a unilateral covenant?
- How does this covenant serve later redemptive history?

### Vocabulary

| TERM | STUDENT NOTES |
|---|---|
| berit | |
| qum | |

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** Who are the stated recipients of the covenant, and what does their range reveal?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** What ordinary blessing do you receive because God preserves the created order?

## IV. GOD GIVES THE BOW AS A SIGN OF COVENANT MERCY (9:12–17)

**Scripture:** 9:12–17

### Guided Notes

- Outline the three divine speeches in verses 8–17.
- What is the stated function of the sign?
- Record Hamilton's and Mathews's emphases regarding the bow imagery.
- Explain "remember" in covenant context.
- Which later passages associate rainbow imagery with God's glory?

### Vocabulary

| TERM | STUDENT NOTES |
|---|---|
| ʾot | |
| qešet | |
| zakar | |

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** What is the divinely stated function of the bow?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** When anxiety rises, how can a covenant sign redirect you to God's spoken promise?

## V. NOAH'S SONS BECOME THE FATHERS OF THE NATIONS (9:18–19)

**Scripture:** 9:18–19

### Guided Notes

- How do these verses look backward to the ark and forward to Genesis 10?
- Why is Canaan named here?
- What does common descent from Noah establish?
- How does the narrative begin to narrow toward Abram?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** How do verses 18–19 connect the ark, the covenant, and the Table of Nations?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** How should shared human ancestry correct pride, suspicion, or contempt?

## VI. NOAH'S SHAME REVEALS THE OLD HUMAN HEART (9:20–24)

**Scripture:** 9:20–24

### Guided Notes

- List the Eden echoes in verses 20–24.
- What is the safest reading of Ham's offense?
- Why are the principal sexual interpretations rejected?
- Contrast Ham's response with Shem and Japheth's response.
- What problem remains after the Flood?

### Vocabulary

| TERM | STUDENT NOTES |
|---|---|
| rāʾâ | |
| gālâ | |

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** Which details intentionally recall Eden, and what do those echoes teach?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** What would it look like to protect someone's vulnerability without concealing sin?

## VII. CURSE, BLESSING, AND DEATH POINT BEYOND NOAH (9:25–29)

**Scripture:** 9:25–29

### Guided Notes

- List the principal explanations for Canaan's curse.
- What uncertainty must be preserved?
- Why is a racial interpretation impossible from the text's theology?
- Who most likely dwells in Shem's tents?
- Trace the canonical movement from Shem to Christ.
- What does Noah's death reveal about his limitations?

### Vocabulary

| TERM | STUDENT NOTES |
|---|---|
| yapt / yepet | |

**DISCUSSION QUESTION** Why must the curse of Canaan never be used to rank ethnic groups?

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE** What false use of this passage must the church reject, and what gospel hope should replace it?

## THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

| SPHERE | APPLICATION PROMPT |
|---|---|
| Personal | Where should God's preserving mercy produce gratitude, restraint, or trust? |
| Family | How can your household honor vulnerability, protect life, and refuse humiliating speech? |
| Church | How should the congregation teach human dignity and correct racist misuse of Genesis 9? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ministry | How can you distinguish social preservation from the heart-renewing work of the gospel? |

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How does Genesis 9 differ from a simple return to Eden?
- Why does the image of God remain central after both fall and flood?
- What makes the Noahic covenant universal and unilateral?
- What does God's "remembering" reveal about covenant faithfulness?
- Why is the plain reading of Ham's offense preferable to speculative reconstructions?
- How should the church answer racial misuse of Canaan's curse?
- How does the chapter preserve hope while showing that Noah is not the final answer?

## PERSONAL NOTES

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

**One truth about God:** _____

**One truth about humanity:** _____

**One key interpretive insight:** _____

**One connection to Christ or the gospel:** _____

**One remaining question:** _____

**One response of faith or obedience:** _____

## FINAL SUMMARY

Complete after the session: Genesis 9:1–29 teaches that _____

_____

_____

## RESOURCES USED

- Genesis 9:1–29 and listed canonical cross-references.
- Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, New American Commentary, vol. 1A.
- Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17, New International Commentary on the Old Testament.
- No additional outside source was used.