

### 3. “All Future Generations” (2Q 2021—The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant)

**Biblical Material:** Gen. 3:6; Gen. 6:5, 8, 11; Gen. 6:18; Gen. 9:12–17; Isa. 4:3, Rev. 12:17.

#### Quotes

- Coming from the sun shining through the dark clouds, the rainbow symbolized the heavenly pervading the earthly. And as it spans the horizon, it reminds man that God’s covenant is universal, as was the Flood that will never recur. *Franz Delitzsch*
- From these words certain eminent theologians have been induced to deny, that there was any rainbow before the deluge: which is frivolous. For the words of Moses do not signify, that a bow was then formed which did not previously exist; but that a mark was engraven upon it, which should give a sign of the divine favor towards men. *John Calvin, commenting on “I have set my bow in the cloud” (Genesis 9:13)*
- If you want the rainbow you have to deal with the rain. *John Green*
- My Sunday school teachers had turned Bible narrative into children’s fables. They talked about Noah and the ark because the story had animals in it. They failed to mention that this was when God massacred all of humanity. *Donald Miller*
- Maybe they’re a “God-send,” but don’t let that sway you... so was The Flood. *Steve Maraboli*
- The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless. *Nicolas Chamfort*

#### Questions

While the “rainbow covenant” certainly is a kind promise by God, how does this look after the killing of everyone on earth except for eight people? How does this promise fit in with the other “covenants” made by God? How do we view this promise for “all future generations” today? How does all this fit into the great controversy perspective?

#### Bible summary

Gen. 3:6 references Eve’s eating of the fruit and giving it to Adam. Gen. 6:5, 8, 11 describes the antediluvian world as totally evil and corrupt, with the exception of Noah. God promises Noah to make a covenant with him and to provide safety for them in the ark (Gen. 6:18). The “rainbow covenant” is given to Noah and his family (and in fact with every living creature) after the Flood that he would never again do this (Gen. 9:12–17). Isa. 4:3 says that the remnant left in Jerusalem will be holy. The dragon is at war with the woman and her children who keep God’s commandments and have the faith of Jesus (Rev. 12:17).

#### Comment

After experiencing such a traumatic event as the Flood, no doubt Noah and his family were concerned that this would happen again. To reassure them God gives the promise of the rainbow which would serve as a reminder of this “covenant. (Some have suggested that part of the reason of building the Tower of Babel was to have a place of safety if there were to be another flood.) Interestingly God says that this covenant was between him and every creature on earth, which together with his preservation of animal life on the ark, shows his concerns go beyond human beings. That the Creator should have to treat his wonderful creation in this way must have been such a traumatic experience, talking from a human point of view. He had

declared his creation as “very good,” and now he has to destroy it in order to permit the demonstration of the consequences of sin to continue. It had all gone downhill so fast that even this evidence could have been misunderstood. So God reboots the program because “The Lord saw how terribly evil people on earth had become—every single thought in their minds was evil all the time!” Genesis 6:5 FBV.

As part of the evidence in the great controversy, some will take this as validating the Devil’s perspective. While God’s continued care for his children after the Flood is laudable, the decision to wipe out all but eight has often been referenced to disparage God’s reputation and character. So we need to see beyond the carnage and look for an honest assessment of how a loving God deals with people who have become totally evil. Beyond this we also need to understand that this is not retribution of an angry and hostile deity, a picture that has more to do with paganism than our Father God. Rather it is the picture we see in Romans 1 of God giving up on a willfully rebellious people who have completely shut God out of their lives. For there was an escape route that only eight chose to take...

This “rainbow covenant” has such tragic overtones that while it is surely appreciated, it does make us reflect on how much God has had to operate at such a basic level with those he loves, those who refuse to accept his offer of life. As a result he has indeed had to act decisively and remove from the scene so many, whether it is those who died in the Flood or the firstborn in Egypt or the 185,000 Assyrians or Uzzah...

To say that any of these “deserved it” misses the point. We all have a limited time in this life to make a decision whether we are going to love God and follow truth and right, or not. God knows the window of opportunity we all have had, and he makes his decisions about our destinies accordingly.

### **Ellen White comments**

What compassion for erring man, to place the beautiful, variegated rainbow in the clouds, a token of the covenant of the great God with man! . . . It was His design that as the children of after generations should see the bow in the cloud, . . . This symbol in the clouds was to confirm the belief of all, and establish their confidence in God, for it was a token of divine mercy and goodness to man. . . {AG 159.2}

The rainbow spanning the heavens with its arch of light is a token of “the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature.” Genesis 9:16. And the rainbow encircling the throne on high is also a token to God’s children of His covenant of peace. As the bow in the cloud results from the union of sunshine and shower, so the bow above God’s throne represents the union of His mercy and His justice. To the sinful but repentant soul God says, Live thou; “I have found a ransom.” Job 33:24. “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Isaiah 54:9, 10. {Ed 115.3}

For nearly a thousand years Adam lived among his descendants, a witness to the results of sin. Faithfully he sought to stem the tide of evil. . . . He witnessed the wide-spreading corruption that was finally to cause the destruction of the world by a flood; and though the sentence of death pronounced upon him by His Maker had at first appeared terrible, yet after beholding for nearly a thousand years the results of sin, he felt that it was merciful in God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow. {CTr 38.5}