

The Noahic Covenant



The Noahic covenant
—made by **God** with **Noah**,
his seed, all creatures, and
the earth itself—enables
the fulfillment of God’s
original purposes for man
and creation by
establishing a stable world
in which to work out the
divine plan of **redemption**.

God made the Noahic covenant with Noah, his seed, all creatures, and the earth itself (Gen 6:18; 9:9–10, 12–13, 15–17). God initiated the covenant in response to Noah’s burnt offering after the flood and because of the remaining sinfulness of every human heart from youth (Gen 8:20–22). Theologians have long noted that without this covenant, human sinfulness would have made the earth liable to one catastrophic judgment after another. Instead, God purposed to maintain the regular order of seasons and days and promised to never again destroy

the earth with a flood or to destroy all living beings (Gen 8:22; 9:11).

God reaffirmed the original creation blessing of human fruitfulness and rule over the creation, though the context of this blessing had become that of a fallen world instead (Gen 9:1–7). God also reaffirmed the value of man as the image bearer of God (Gen 9:5–6). He laid covenantal responsibilities on mankind: no flesh is to be eaten with its blood remaining in it; animals and humans who kill humans are themselves to be killed (Gen 9:4–6).

The reaffirmation of the original creation blessing leads some interpreters to the conclusion that the Noahic covenant is also the reaffirmation of the Adamic or creation covenant. This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that the wording used when God announced the covenant is the wording typically used for maintaining an existing covenant rather than the wording used for making a new covenant (Gen 6:18; 9:8, 11, 17). On the other hand, the covenant partners are different; the requirements are different (keep the garden and do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, versus do not eat flesh with blood and execute the death penalty); and the penalties for disobedience are different (death, versus no penalties).

Because God always unconditionally selects the persons with whom he makes a covenant, and because all covenants con-

tain requirements, some theologians have rejected the classification of covenants into “unconditional” or “conditional” covenants. But defenders of this classification argue that, though it places requirements on humans, the Noahic covenant is unconditional because the promises of the covenant are not dependent on human [obedience](#). The unconditionality of the covenant is symbolized by the [rainbow](#), which serves as a reminder to God of his covenant ([Gen 9:15](#)).

Because the Noahic covenant is a common-grace covenant (it is made with all creation), some have argued that it is not a redemptive covenant. Others have argued that it provides the stable foundation for all of the redemptive covenants to be worked out. The Noahic covenant also indicates that the scope of redemption will extend to all creation, as indicated by certain [new-covenant](#) passages that echo the Noahic covenant ([Ezek 34:25–30](#)).

Passages

KEY VERSES

- [Ge 8:20–9:17](#)
- [Is 24:3–5](#)
- [Is 54:9–10](#)
- [Ps 104:9](#)
- [Je 5:22–25](#)
- [Je 33:19–26](#) (The covenant with day and night may be the Noahic Covenant.)

Recommended Resources

- 📖 “The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology,” (Chalmers) in *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2008), 206–16.
- 📖 *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Dumbrell), 11–43.
- 🔒 [Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants](#) (Gentry and Wellum), 147–176.
- 🔒 [Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Plan](#) (Williamson), 59–76.
- 🔒 [The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man](#) (Witsius), Vol. II, 129–141.

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Related Topics

- [The Spirit and Common Grace](#)
- [The Covenant of Creation](#)
- [The Covenants of Grace](#)
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See Also

- [God makes a covenant with Noah](#)
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