

The Bow in the Clouds

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[0:00] I'm going to invite one of our members, Kelly Akers, to come and read scripture for us.! Kelly's going to read from Genesis chapter 8, verses 20 to chapter 9, verses 17.

If you've got a church Bible, it's on page 6. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles on the back table. The words are also in your bulletin, and they'll be on the screen. Amen. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning.

From every beast I will require it, and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. And you be fruitful and multiply. Increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you. And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you. As many as came out of the ark, it is for every beast of the earth.

I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. And never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations. I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

[2:56] God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth. Let's pray together. Lord, we come now to your word and we ask for help. We ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit. We cannot do anything apart from the Spirit. And so we ask now that Holy Spirit, living breath of God, you would speak to us. Help us to understand. Help us to hear. Help us to believe.

Help us to have a fresh vision of the power of the gospel. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We are working our way through Genesis 4 to 11. We had a break last week, but we're back this week and we're on Genesis chapter 9 primarily. And Genesis chapter 9, I think, is the clearest place in the early parts of the Bible where God tells us how He feels about us and what He thinks about us.

He tells you what He thinks about you and how He feels about you. And the way we've gotten to this moment is that we've said every week, this section of the Bible is really exploring what's wrong with us. And the answer every week has been sin, this disease that we have, this power within us that's corrupting the world, corrupting us from the inside out. And in Genesis 3, when sin first entered the world, God said to Adam and Eve that one day a child would be born of the offspring of Eve that would crush the head of evil, the serpent of death. And so we've been tracing the question, who is this one?

Who is the seed that would one day arise from Genesis 3, 15 forward? And when you get to the flood story, you realize that God has plucked Noah out of the world and put him in an ark and saved him through the waters of judgment by way of the ark. And he comes out of the ark in Genesis

chapter 8, and you realize that this is the one from whom the one offspring would one day be born. And so we're tracing the seed. And that's why there's so many genealogies in the book of Genesis, a couple more to come in the following weeks. And then lastly, in Genesis 8, 18 to 19, the verses just before Kelly started reading for us today, Noah and his family and all the creatures went out from the ark, paraded out two by two. And it was as if God had decreed the world in the flood story. He had undone all that he had done in Genesis 1, and then put all the waters back in their places and recreated it and told the second Adam and Eve to walk out with all the animals into this new world, recreation. And we're left there wondering, what is God now going to do with us? What is God going to do with humanity in the world? Now, the way that theologians and commentators have talked about Genesis 9 for many centuries now is to see it...it helps us see the world as if the world is like a theater. So imagine the whole cosmos like a great theater. John Calvin said the world, the cosmos, is the theater of God's glory. And in this great cosmic theater, there is a drama taking place. And the drama, the play, the stage play, is what God is doing with humans and creatures across this world. And he, of course, is the great author that's written the script. And Genesis 3, all the way to this point, basically just says, we burned the script, the actors on the stage, and we refused to act in the drama that God was playing out.

And when Noah and his family walk out of the ark in Genesis 8 into Genesis 9, it's as if the great director, the great author is saying, okay, once more from the top. And here the question becomes, what is he going to do with us now? And here's where we find out what he really thinks about us, what he wants to do with us, how he sees us. Boy, is this a recreation. Look at our passage that Kelly read, chapter 9, verse 1, and verse 7, they're the same. And in verse 1 of chapter 9, what does he say?

[6:56] Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. That's a quote from Genesis 1, 28. And he's reissuing all the commands of Genesis 1 again. He's starting over. He's resetting things. It's like new creation.

That's the thought you should have. Now, we are not going to talk about verses 1 to 7 today. We'll come back to them next week as we consider 18 to 28. But this week, I just want to focus on verse 8 to 17 with you because that really is the place where we find out what does God think about us even though sin still lives in this world after the flood. Listen to what Martin Luther says about this. Luther reads verse 12 and 13 from chapter 9 in his commentary on this. And he says this, God said, the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. And then Luther writes, this is an indication of God's extraordinary affection, affection for humanity. Noah and his people were in great need of such a comfort. God takes extraordinary delight in pouring forth compassion like a mother who is bringing her children toward her to comfort them in order that they might finally begin to forget the tears of the past events and smile once more. And so, this passage says that God has promised a perpetual mercy upon the world. That is, Luther says like a mother drawing her children in and showing how much affection she has for them, wiping away their tears. This passage tells you what God thinks about you after all we've read so far basically in the book of Genesis is that our response to him has only ever been apathy, hatred, rejection, burning the script that he wrote. And this is what he says. This is what he does. This is what he gives. And here's what he gives. Two things. One, he gives you a covenant. And secondly, he gives you a bow in the clouds.

So first, he gives you a covenant. Now, one pastor put it like this. When the flood ended at the very last section of chapter 8 that Kelly began reading for us in 20 and 21, the waters have receded and the animals have gone out in a parade from the ark two by two. And one writer puts it like this. He says, boys and girls, what was in the ark? You know, that classic Sunday school question that all the boys and girls downstairs could answer right now. Boys and girls, what was in the ark? And of course, the answer is Noah and his family and so many animals. And when you read 8, 20 and 21, you realize so was Noah's heart. And his heart in the ark was still full of sin. Sin was still in the ark. And sin came back out of the ark. God, you know, think about it like this. God took the most holy people on earth that he knew of, and he knows them all. Noah and his family, the people that he called blameless, the people that had their life the best together. And he put them in an ark and he brought them through the waters of judgment. And yet still, 8, 21 says, when they came out, they brought their sin back into the world.

And in 8, 21, what did God say? He says, I will no longer flood the world, judge humanity like I've just done because the sin of the human heart, the intention of the human heart is only evil from its youth. Now, he had given that as the reason for bringing the flood. Now he gives it as the reason for

what he's about to say next. He says, because Noah and his family are still sinners and have still brought sin back into the world in this moment of what seems like a new creation, he makes a promise.

And this is what he does. Notice how he says, the problem is the human heart. It's not just that there are bad people out there that are gone now. The problem isn't here. It's still the same problem for us. The problem is here. It's in the heart. And so God then turns in 21 and gives his heart. So if you look at 8, 21, the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma of Noah's sacrifice. And the Lord said in his heart, after looking at the heart of Noah, that was still sinful. You see, you have this little moment where God's allowing you to enter into the divine council, the intra-Trinitarian thought of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit taking counsel with himself. And he said in his heart, God said in his heart, I will never again flood the earth the way I've just done. And so just look at these. These are the promises. Here they are in 8, 21 and 22. I will never again curse the ground because of humanity. And then you say, well, what do you mean by that? And then the second sentence, never again will I strike down every living creature. In other words, he's saying,

[11:48] I will not get rid of the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve, despite the fact that they have only rejected me. And even in the most blameless man I could find, there's still sin. That the flood did not rid the world of this great problem. But he says, never again. I will keep them. I will preserve them. And then he goes on and says, and the animals, the beasts, the creeping things, all of it.

I will, in other words, he's saying, I will not give the cosmos what the humans have earned or merited for it. And that's death and judgment. And then you say, well, what about, what's the positive explanation of that? And then in 8, 22, he says, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, the cosmic order I will preserve, I'll keep. From the subatomic, the most small bits of the cosmic structure, all the way to the grandest bits of the sun, moon, and stars in the universe, the cosmic structure I'm going to keep, I'm not going to give this world what it ultimately deserves. He tells us that he's keeping it and he's keeping us. And so this is a moment where he pronounces perpetual state of mercy, a common mercy, where he never gives anybody what they actually deserve. And he includes the whole world in that. And so what is this? He gives us the name for how we should think about this. And the word that he attaches to it is the word that shows up in the rest of the passage, 8 to 17, the word covenant. This is a covenant. And so you can see it down from verse, chapter 9, verse 8. He says, I will establish my covenant in verse 9 with you and all your offspring.

And by the way, Noah and his family are all that's there. All the offspring of Noah is every person, every human, every person that would ever live. And he calls this a covenant. Now, what is a covenant?

A covenant is something that we know from normal life. We think about the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. There are other types of covenants that happen between people. You can even have covenant in friendship. We see David and Jonathan as friends making a covenant in the Bible.

So covenants happen between people all the time. And here's a definition. This is a helpful definition, I think. I'll say it twice just because I know definitions can sometimes be hard to listen to. [14:13] But this is a covenant. A covenant is a loving relationship marked by binding promises promises that create loyal obligation. A covenant is a loving relationship with binding promises or vows that create loyal obligations. And so in the ancient Near East, they also had covenants all over. That's where we really get covenants from. God made them, and then they're all over the world in the ancient world. And they had a couple things slightly different from a common covenant we might make today like in wedding vows. So number one, to have a covenant, you've got to have two parties, and they've got to make a vow to one another, a binding promise. But the second thing that came with covenants in the ancient world that we don't at least say out loud as often today is what's called the oath of malediction. So at the end of the service, I'm going to give a benediction, benediction, a good word pronounced from the Bible to the people. But there's also maledictions, bad words pronounced over people as well. And that's what the oath of malediction is referring to. So people in the ancient world would say, I've just made a vow with you, and if I break this vow, may I be cursed. That's an oath of malediction. And so that comes commonly with ancient Near Eastern covenants. And then the last part of the covenant would be there would be some kind of ceremony or a sign to commemorate the making of that obligation, that relationship. So today we

use wedding rings to signal sign and to help you remember the obligation, the vows you've made in the marriage covenant. But that's always been the case. And we have one, of course, that we'll talk about in just a moment right here. So kings make covenants with each other. Clans make covenants with each other in the Bible. Jacob makes a covenant with Laban. David and Jonathan make a covenant of friendship.

And of course, we know the covenant of marriage. This moment is the first explicit covenant made, talked about in the whole Bible in a really explicit, upfront sort of way. And in that section, 8 to 17, if you look at it carefully, if you read every clause carefully, what you find is that this is a very highly stylized passage where it's almost as if you're reading a wedding registry, the piece of paper that you sign on a wedding day. It's printed almost like that. There's a rhythm.

I will establish my covenant with you. It's repeated multiple times. And then the vows, the chorus line, the obligations, the chorus line, the oath of malediction hidden within the sign, and the chorus line, if you were to work carefully through it. Let me put it like this. I won't do this now because there would be far too long of an awkward silence while you counted. But if I asked you, go through 8 to 17 and count how many times the word covenant appears in a rhythm, it appears seven times. It's a very highly chosen, stylized way of God speaking, pronouncing. Imagine that, seven times because it's following Genesis 1 in the days of creation and saying, I'm reestablishing creation order, and I'm making a covenant here with you in the same logic like I made you in Genesis chapter 1. And so here it is. What's this covenant? This covenant, who are the parties? Chapter 9, verse 9, we read who the parties are. God says, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you. So then he goes on. That's with every single human being, God and every human being, and then with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, every beast of the earth, as many came out of the ark. It is for every single animal, beast, creature in the whole earth.

He's saying something astonishing. God has covenanted from this moment with every single thing that he ever made. He's entered into a covenant. And then you say, well, where are the vows? Verse 11, he gives the vows. I establish my covenant with you. There's the chorus line that never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

[18:29] There's his covenant vows, his promises. I will never again bring a flood that would wipe the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve off the earth and all the creeping things. And then you say, okay, a covenant needs a sign. It needs a wedding ring. It needs a symbol. And you come down to verse 12 to 13, and he says, I will put my bow in the clouds. And I will look at the sign, and I will remember my covenant with you and with all the beasts and all the creatures. Now, friends, the most important thing, I think, maybe one of the most important things to know today is that this covenant that God made with all of the cosmos is very much in force today. And that God is actively existing in covenant relationship with you and with all the animals and all the beasts of the field and the stars in the heavens and the whole cosmos from the tiniest little subatomic particles all the way to the highest heavens right now underneath the obligations that he made in Genesis chapter 9 and this covenant. And so let me be as precise as I can be about this covenant. This covenant that stands today does not promise forgiveness as the rest of the covenants we'll see in the Bible does. Instead, it's promising preservation. And God is saying, he's giving really what we now call something that the theologians call common grace. And he's saying that I will be patient and loving and kind to all people, no matter what they believe in. And I will preserve them. And I will, you tried to burn down the stage,

I'm keeping it. And I'm going to play out the drama of history. And that's my promise. And that means that the reason this covenant exists is he's saying, while this covenant might not be the promise of forgiveness yet, he's saying, I'm keeping the stage so that I can work out the drama of redemption on the stage. And Abraham's covenant is coming to work out the drama of redemption on the stage. What does it mean? Let me give you a few things. Number one, number one, we've got to be willing to look at the world the same way God looks at the world. And Genesis 9 tells you how God looks at the world.

First off, do you read your life and actually all of history underneath the covenant structure that God has taught you exist in the Bible? He's telling us here something profound. And that's that without the concept of covenant, really the Bible is just an anthology of stories that God's given you about people's faith. But when you see that covenant is the structure, not only of the Bible, but of all of

history, it's actually the way you should think about all of history and even your life, that my life exists underneath the covenant. That's the whole meaning of the space-time continuum that we're walking in right now. But secondly, not only is it a mindset for you philosophy students in the room, a historiography of how you should think about the world. It's also a mindset for how you approach the world in the way that God does.

One of the big issues we face today is the issue of the age of the internet giving rise to the addiction of scrolling, scrolling ourselves to death. And we all probably struggle with that to some degree. And one of the terms that's been coined to describe this is doom scrolling, but that's led to a second concept that I think describes something very real, and that's doomerism.

Doom scrolling leads to doomerism. And what is doomerism? It's that we look out of the world and we have a mindset of fatalism, of pessimism, of cynicism, especially cultivated by doom scrolling and the internet. And we think, I can only see the bad. Really, that's what the mindset is.

[22 : 32] I look at the political realm and I only see the bad. I look at the ecological realm and I only see the bad. I look at the economic realm and I only see the bad. And doom scrolling has created a whole movement of doomerism. But Genesis 9 says something so nuanced, and it's 821, the intention of the human heart is only evil from its youth. Yes, things are bad. And yet, God looks at the world and says, I have set my covenant on this world to promise from the tiniest to the greatest thing that's ever existed that I'm keeping it and it's good. You know, you woke up this morning and the buildings were still standing and the heat came on in the church today, unlike last week. And, you know, you had coffee probably and tea and breakfast and the crops are still coming up. And actually, actually, while on the one hand, the world is so sinful and broken, on the other hand, because of the Noahic covenant, the world is so good in so many ways. Not ethically, no, broken morally, oh, to be sure. But look at the gifts. And actually, chaos is not the normal state of our lives. It would be, it would all be Mad Max without the Noahic covenant. The other thing we might, you know, we might be, you might be prone to doomerism. Some of us are prone on the opposite wing to what the ancients called acedia. And acedia is really an old word for a type of boredom. Doom scrolling can cause this too. And it's, you know, I'm just bored by everything. Everything is dull. I just don't care about anything. I have apathy in my life. The old monks in the early church called this the noonday demon, where every day by the time you get to noon, you wake up and think, what am I doing? This is all pointless. And that's not really laziness, but it's a heart that stopped receiving the promise of the

Noahic covenant. And here's the diagnosis. Here's the problem, is that sin is, of course, things we do, ways we break God's moral law. But sin also makes us unable to see the good things. And acedia creeps in. We're bored with everything. Everything's dull. And this passage is saying we're not yet seeing the world the way God sees it. That He loves this place and the people and the creatures and the bugs and the spiders and all of it. And a third final way, the old church, the early church called this the problem of Gnosticism.

It's a fancy word for a simple idea. And that's just, Gnosticism is always something that can creep into the church's consciousness. And it's something that says this, the world is a place for me to escape. There is only danger out there, outside the walls of the church and Christian community. Everything that I touch, taste, eat, everything is bad. And so I need to discipline myself maximally and get away, even from the physical at times, because it is only the spiritual, only the heavenly that's good. And actually, in some sense, we're trying to be holier than God when we think that.

[25 : 43] Because God says that He loves the bugs and the people and every person that exists in the whole cosmos, that He's made them and He's preserving them and He's keeping them and He's keeping them.

It's not a promise here that all are redeemed. The promise here is that He's saying, I'm keeping, I'm giving you breath, I'm keeping you alive so that you would see my patience and my love and enter into the drama of redemption fully that I have built for you on this stage.

And so I just want to ask you, do you see the world the way God sees it? Do you love the city and love the people and love the creatures as much as God loves them? All creatures, great and small. And the medicine here, I have to move on to the very brief final thing, but G.K. Chesterton, I love how he puts it.

Think about chapter 9, verse 10. We're being told here that God has bound Himself in love to this world. And G.K. Chesterton writes this. He talks about the child who comes to their parent, you know, pulling on their shirt all the time and saying, do it again, do it again, do it again. My wee little

Isabel two-year-old, she says over and over, chase me, chase me, chase me. And she's two, so it's very cute. It's fine. But as they get older, you know, it becomes something different. And the grown-up, Chesterton says this, by the way, the grown-up gets worn out and says, stop asking me for things. Stop saying, do it again, do it again, do it again. But Chesterton writes, but God may be more like that child than He is like we adults. Because every morning He says to the sun, do it again. Every evening He says to the moon, do it again. And He never gets bored. Day and night, seed time and harvest.

And Chesterton writes, God perhaps has the eternal appetite of infancy, for we have sinned and we've grown old. And our Father is far younger than we are. His child, He's got an appetite for loving to see the world functioning in its cosmic structure. He delights in it. And the question is, do we? Boy, He's bound Himself to us. He's bound Himself to us. And so, finally, He hangs His bow in the clouds. He not only establishes a covenant, He hangs His bow in the clouds, very briefly. Some of us here today not only are maybe saying, yeah, I do want to grow in seeing the world the way God does, not in doomerism or ascedia or gnosticism, but in the delight God has actually in the created world, acknowledging fully 821, it's sinfulness, it's brokenness, it's moral depravity. But some of us today need to see something else, and that's the truth of the way God sees you.

[28:34] And so, you might be a Christian today, and you read 821 and say, the desires of my heart are only evil and very so intentionally from my youth, and I feel that very much. I come back to the same sins every month, every year, every week, every day. And maybe you've built up a massive amount of guilt in your life, and you think, God must be so tired of me. I come back with the same problems, the same issues.

And today, you need to see the Noahic covenant, not because it's a covenant of redemption, but because it says to you that God has bound Himself to you in ways that you can't even imagine, that He loves you and is patient with you beyond your imagination. And you got to see, you know, in the way that you got to see the world the way God sees the world, you got to see yourself the way God sees you. And again, listen to the nuance. Sinner from the bottom, you know. He sees you. He sees you all the way to the bottom, and He knows the truth about you, yet He binds Himself to you in the Noahic covenant and says, but I love you to the sky. And so, I'm keeping the stage so that you could find redemption.

That's how much I want you. That's how much I love you. And so, He hangs His bow in the clouds as we finish. Notice in this passage, especially in verses 9 to 13, where does Noah and the animals and where do you sign the dotted line of the wedding registry here? God comes and says, I'm establishing my covenant with you, but notice that Noah never even says anything. And the animals don't get a choice.

Of course, they can't to enter into this covenant. And Abraham Kuyper puts it like this, God does not ask whether people approve of this covenant. He decides it, and it remains that way, even if we should resist it with all of our might. And you see, this is so contra modernist individualism, but the disease of sin says on the one hand, of course, I don't want the flood. I don't want God's judgment. Of course, we don't. But the disease of sin in our hearts also says, I don't want His mercy either. I don't want anything to do with Him. That's what sin actually creates in us. Let us make a name for ourselves. That's the chorus line of Genesis 4 to 11. I don't want anything to do with His judgment. [30:58] I don't want anything to do with His mercy. I want to be left alone. I want to be the king of my own life. And therefore, in this covenant, it is what the theologians call unilateral, one way. It comes down. You don't even get a say in it. And only, only in that scenario could we possibly be saved.

This is unlike any human relationship, not like marriage even, because in marriage, you have two people vowing to one another. But here, you have God binding Himself to you before you were ever even a thought in the world, before you were born. And that is why the bow, that's why He gives the bow.

Because the question remains, if 821 is true and our hearts are only evil, only struggling with sin, only bent away from Him and towards ourselves, is God just saying, I'm keeping the world, I'm preserving the world. And I'm not really concerned about the question of justice anymore. You know, I'm going to let them fall down into the depths that they were in in Genesis 6. Again, violence, murder, sexual sin of all kinds. And He says, you know, it's all fine because I'm just going to be merciful, never bring justice. And that would not be a holy God. That would not be a good God.

And so He hangs the bow in the clouds. Verse 13, I've set my bow in the cloud. Now, listen, friends, rainbows already existed, just like bread existed before the Lord's Supper.

Of course it did. But if you look today and say, oh, come on, a rainbow is now this sign of God's perpetual mercy in the world. And you say, that's just not what it means. Rainbows are scientific. [32 : 39] They're refractions of light after a storm through the lens of the sunshine hitting them and creating this colorful spectrum. It's just something the human eye catches in the scientific order that we live in. But look, that's like saying, that's like saying, look, I see all of you and all I see is a collocation of atoms. God has taken something that's so real in the scientific order, the cosmic structure, that already existed and He set it aside to be a covenant sign or we might call it a sacrament.

And so all the covenants have sacraments. Adam's covenant, God's covenant with Adam, the tree of life is a sacrament. And Abraham's covenant, circumcision will become the sacrament, the sign. And then in the new covenant, of course, baptism and the Lord's Supper. So here God gives a covenant sign, a bow, a rainbow. But it's so important to see that the word that is written in verse 13 is not the word rainbow exactly. The word written in verse 13 in Hebrew is the word for the warrior's bow.

It is the bow that shoots an arrow. And so he says here, I have hung up my warrior's bow in the cloud. And that is the sign of my love for you, my preservation of you. Meredith Klein, one theologian, says this, God's battle bow has been laid aside, a token of grace, staying the lightning shafts of wrath through the flood. God has decided, I will hang up my bow. I will not bring the judgment on them that they deserve. You know, if you think about this warrior's bow hung in the sky, which direction does it point? If you were to attach an arrow to the rainbow, this warrior's bow in the sky, where would the arrow go? And the arrow would only go up. It would shoot upward. And God's taking this real thing that exists out in the world and he's saying, you look at that and realize that it's not just that I've been willy-nilly about justice. I've not just thrown the question of justice out altogether. No, I have turned the bow against myself. Just like in Genesis 15, when Abraham was told to cut up the pieces and God as a covenant sign would pass between them, Abraham vowing, if I break the conditions of the covenant, may I be cut in pieces like these animals. But when it came time, Abraham was put to sleep and God passed between the pieces for Abraham. God saying, may I be cut in half if Abraham breaks the conditions of the covenant. And in the Noahic covenant, what about justice? God is saying, the oath of malediction falls only on me. He has hung his bow in the clouds. He has shot his arrow into the heart of heaven. And who sits at the heart of heaven? It is Jesus Christ, the Son. He turns his bow against the Son. The Son says, I will take the arrow. The Son of God says that. And that means that when you come to a place like Isaiah 53 and you read, Jesus Christ will be stricken and pierced.

For our transgressions. He took the arrow. He took the arrow of your injustice. The arrow that your injustice deserves at the hand of God's justice. And that means the rainbow directs you straight to the cross. And the last thing I'll say is, the last thing I'll say is that when you read this text, especially at the end of verse 14 to 17, who does it say that the sign is actually for?

[36 : 06] It's not even primarily for Noah. Verse 16, when the bow is in the clouds, God says, I will look at it. I will see. I will remember. You see that? He's saying the bow in the clouds is the sign for God to remember. And it's not at all saying that he forgets, but instead what he's doing is he's inviting you into something. He's inviting you to see every time today. Let me ask you, do you do this? Today, there's pretty decent conditions for a rainbow today. When you go out into the world, do you just look through the lens of your scientific materialist worldview, or do you go out into the world and see that rainbows today are the covenant sign that God has given you, that you would look at, and you would know he is looking at that rainbow right now and saying, the bow I see pointed me in the beginning of history directly to the cross. And now when God looks at the rainbow, what is he looking at? He's looking at the cross. He's seeing the one to whom the rainbow pointed, that the arrow would strike the sun on your behalf, that he would die in your place. And look, in order to have a rainbow, you've got to have storm clouds. And so let me invite you, every time you look at a rainbow, no matter what you believe today, this is what it's saying to you. The storm clouds were there before the rainbow showed up, right? You got to look at the storm clouds before, and you got to say, the storm clouds represent my life, my heart, the condition of my heart, 821, that without me seeing the dark clouds first, I'm not ever going to see the covenant promise that has been fulfilled for me at the cross of Jesus Christ. But then you got to look at the rainbow

that follows the cloud and say, he's done it for me. The rainbow tells me that once again, I am a child of God.

I have been adopted. You got to hear God say, I see the bow. I remember the cross. I see the baptismal waters down here, and I see Christ crucified for you. I see the bread broken at the table. I see the wine poured, and I see the blood of Christ poured for you. God is saying that I look at the sacraments. I look at the rainbow. I look at the bread. I look at the wine. I look at the water, and I remember how much I love you. George Matheson, Edinburgh minister, George Matheson, a long time ago. He wrote the hymn, O Love That Will Not Let Me Go. We're going to sing it now. And in the third stanza, he writes, O joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee. I trace the rainbow through the rain, and I feel the promise is not vain. That morn shall tearless be. The morn that is to come, and that morn is Revelation 4.3. In the new heavens and the new earth, the Son of Man appears. He sits on his throne, and John writes, I saw the Son of Man on the throne, and a rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled above him. And that is the morn that the rainbow points us to. Let us pray, Father. We ask that you would help our hearts now to trace the rainbow through the rain, that we would see the astounding love that you have for us, the mercy, perpetual mercy you've placed upon this world as the stage, the theater of your glory and redemption, and that we would be reminded that the rainbow points us to the cross, that in Jesus, all the arrows were let go, released into him that we deserved. And we thank you, Lord, that Christ is the meeting place of judgment and mercy, our mercy, the mercy you've given to us. So I pray today that even as we sing these words of George Matheson, we would be helped to trace the rainbow through the dark clouds of our lives. And we pray that in Christ's name. Amen.