



Week 1

Genesis 9:8-17

9:9 Gn 6:18**9:11** Gn 8:21;
Is 54:9**9:12** Gn 17:11

⁸God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, ¹⁰and with every living being with you—with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. ¹¹I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²God said, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. ¹³I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. ¹⁶The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth’s creatures.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth.”

^hLXX; MT includes *for all the animals of the earth*.

Israel among the Nations The stories in Genesis speak on two levels. The first is the family level. Here the characters represent the individuals that make up a typical biblical family. The second is the national level. On this more symbolic level, the characters represent the nations made up of their descendants. Thus Jacob (renamed Israel) represents a single ancestor and at the same time the entire people of Israel who count themselves as his descendants.

The stories in Genesis, therefore, describe not only the relations between the individuals in the stories but also the relations between the nations descended from them. In this regard, Genesis contains a political map. Its stories are intended to describe the relations between the nations that existed at later times in Israel’s history when the writers of Genesis lived.

The major nations represented in Genesis by their ancestors are the Canaanites (Gen 9:20-27); the Ishmaelites (Gen 16:1-6; 21:8-21); the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen 19:30-38); the Philistines (Gen 21:22-34; 26:1-33); the Edomites (Gen 25:19-34; 27:1-45; 32:1-33:17); and the Arameans (Gen 29:1-31:55). These peoples shared Israel’s borders and shaped its national life. In these stories of the origins of Israel and these nations, the authors of Genesis reveal the values toward international relations present in their own time.

Genesis presents a two-sided message about Israel’s neighbors. On the one hand, the text says that Israel’s neighbors are close relatives of Israel’s own ancestors. The Ishmaelites, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Arameans are all descendants of Abraham’s father, Terah. Thus these neighboring nations aren’t viewed as foreign or alien. Instead, these groups share Israel’s identity and deserve the respect and privileges given to any family member. God appears to the ancestors of Israel’s neighbors and makes promises to them (Gen 16:7-11). Genesis portrays the ancestors of Israel’s neighbors as generous peacemakers who often work to reconcile differences (Gen 21:22; 26:26-29; 33:1-4).

While embracing these nations as members of Israel’s own family, the authors of Genesis frequently present them in a less-than-favorable light. The Canaanites’ ancestors show disrespect to their father, Noah, and are cursed to serve the Israelites (Gen 9:20-27). The Ishmaelites’ mother, Hagar, is forced out from Abraham’s household. Her descendants live in the desert, facing constant conflict with surrounding peoples (Gen 16:12). The Moabites and Ammonites have questionable origins in the union of Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38). The Edomites are descendants of Esau, Jacob’s (Israel’s) own brother. However, his descendants are placed in Israel’s service (Gen 27:29). Each of these stories seeks to position the Israelite kingdom—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—most favorably in its ancient political context.

This twofold picture of Israel’s relations with its neighbors effectively describes both the bonds and the conflicts between Israel and the surrounding nations. Genesis affirms the identity and interests Israel shares with its neighbors. Yet the book recognizes the tensions, conflicts, and self-interest that emerge between nations. When tensions do arise in Genesis between Israel’s ancestors and the ancestors of the surrounding nations, they are resolved through reconciliation or by a formal agreement, rather than by conflict and violence. Such is the case with the Philistines (Gen 21:27; 26:31); the Arameans (Gen 31:44); and the Edomites (Gen 33:1-4). When Simeon and Levi choose violence, Jacob disapproves and disinherits them (Gen 34:30; 49:5-7). Underlying these stories is the confidence that international conflict is best resolved peacefully.

9:8-17 The orders of the new era following the flood are guaranteed by a *covenant* God makes with the entire world: with the *earth* (9:13); with *every living being* (that is, with all the world’s animals; 9:10); and with *Noah* and all his *descendants* (that is, with all the world’s people; 9:9). It’s the first of three covenants that mark the major periods of history in the post-flood era. The second is with Abraham (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-27); and the third and climactic covenant is with Israel at Mount Sinai, where all the instructions for living as a religious people are given (Exod 31:12-17).

9:9-11 The *covenant* is initiated, drawn up, and guaranteed by God. It is eternal (Gen 9:11, 12, 16).

9:12-16 The *symbol of the covenant* with the world is a natural phenomenon: the rainbow. The Hebrew word is actually *bow*, which usually refers to the weapon used by ancient Near Eastern soldiers and deities, including Israel’s God (Hab 3:9; Lam 2:4). God’s weapon of war and death is laid aside in the clouds and becomes the sign of the peace and life assured in the covenant.

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Week 1

Psalm 25:1-10

25:1 Ps 86:4,
Ps 143:8

Psalm 25^s*Of David.*

25:4 Ex 33:13;
Ps 5:8, Ps 27:11,
Ps 86:11,
Ps 143:8

N ¹ I offer my life^t to you, LORD.

25:5 Ps 43:3

Q ² My God, I trust you.

25:7 Job 13:26,

Job 20:11;
Ps 51:1,
Ps 109:26,
Ps 119:124

Please don't let me be put to shame!

Don't let my enemies rejoice over me!

25:8 Ps 32:8,

Ps 92:15,
Ps 119:68;
Is 26:7

I ³ For that matter, don't let anyone who hopes in you be put to shame;
instead, let those who are treacherous without excuse be put to shame.

25:9 Ps 23:3,

Ps 27:11

T ⁴ Make your ways known to me, LORD;
teach me your paths.

25:10 Ps 103:18

P ⁵ Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—
because you are the God who saves me.

I I put my hope in you all day long.

I ⁶ LORD, remember your compassion and faithful love—
they are forever!

P ⁷ But don't remember the sins of my youth or my wrongdoing.
Remember me only according to your faithful love
for the sake of your goodness, LORD.

Q ⁸ The LORD is good and does the right thing;
he teaches sinners which way they should go.

I ⁹ God guides the weak to justice,
teaching them his way.

Q ¹⁰ All the LORD's paths are loving and faithful
for those who keep his covenant and laws.

^sPs 25 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10. ^tOr *soul*; also in 25:13, 20

God's Faithful Love One of the most important words in the OT, including the Psalms, is a Hebrew word translated as “faithful love” (or sometimes “loyal love” when it is paired with “faithfulness”). “Faithful love” occurs often in all types of psalms. The word occurs twice in God's self-revelation to Moses (see “loyalty” in Exod 34:6-7). It's a one-word summary of God's character; and it isn't surprising that Exodus 34:6-7 is a brief statement of faith for Israel (see Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2) that's echoed in Psalms 86:15; 103:8; and 145:8.

God's “faithful love” is a basic reason for praising God. Some songs of praise or thanks include “faithful love” in the first verse (see Pss 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1), or elsewhere in the psalm (see Pss 33:5, 18, 22; 98:3; 100:5; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 117:2; 147:11). Many of the prayers for help use “faithful love” as the basis of appeal (see Pss 6:4; 25:6-7; 31:7, 16, 21; 44:26; 51:1; 57:3; 63:3); and the psalmists often speak about their hope and trust in God's “faithful love” (see Pss 5:7; 13:5; 23:6). The speakers affirm that God's “faithful love fills the whole earth” (Ps 33:5; see 36:5), and that it “is better than life itself” (Ps 63:3).

25:1-22 Perhaps because of the acrostic pattern (see translation note s), the structure of Psalm 25 is irregular. Even so, it contains the typical elements of a prayer for help—sections of complaint and petition (25:2b-3, 4-7, 11, 16-18, 19-22), along with sections of praise and trust (25:8-10, 12-15).

25:1 *offer my life*: The verb here is sometimes used for making a sacrifice. Here, in effect, the psalmist offers her or his whole self to God (see Rom 12:1-2). See Psalms 86:4; 143:8 where trust also occurs in the context of the psalmist offering his or her life to God.

25:2 *trust*: See Psalm 4:5. *put to shame*: The first petition (Ps 25:2b-3) features a threefold occurrence of this phrase, which occurs again in the final petition (Ps 25:20). The enemies, who are present here as always in the prayers for help, constantly seek to exploit the psalmists (see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3).

25:4-7 The enemies are absent from this second petition, and the focus is on the speaker and God.

25:4-5 *teach*: To trust God means to want to do God's will, so the speaker prays to be taught (see Ps 25:9, 12). *hope*: A keyword in the psalm (see Ps 25:3, 21). Trust and hope are inseparable (see Ps 27:14; Heb 11:1).

25:6 *remember*: The word occurs three times in Psalm 25:6-7. The psalmist is honest about sinfulness (Ps 25:7, 11, 18), but trusts that God will *remember* God's forgiving nature that is described in the rest of verse 6 and in verse 7. *your compassion*: This is a basic quality of God (see Exod 34:6). The Hebrew noun means a “womb,” so God's *compassion* suggests God's motherly love. *faithful love*: Another basic quality of God (see Pss 25:7, 10; 5:7; Exod 34:6; sidebar, “God's Faithful Love” at Ps 7).

25:7 *goodness*: As in Psalm 25:6, another basic quality of God is mentioned (see Ps 23:6).

25:9 *justice*: a summary of God's typical purpose (see Ps 9:4).

25:10 *loving and faithful*: “Loving” repeats the word translated “faithful love” in Psalm 25:6-7. Faithfulness is yet another basic quality of God, often paired with “faithful love,” as here (see Exod 34:6). *who keep his covenant*: It may seem here that God's love is restricted to those who obey (see also Ps 25:14), but the speaker hasn't been fully obedient, and so is finally dependent on God's kind and loving willingness to forgive (see Ps 25:7, 11, 18).

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1 Peter 3:18-22

3:18 Col 1:21;
Heb 9:26;
Heb 9:28;
1Pt 2:21, 1Pt 4:1

3:19 1Pt 4:6

3:20 Gn 6:3,
Gn 6:14, Gn 8:18;
Heb 11:7; 2Pt 2:5

3:21 Ro 6:3;
Ga 3:27; Ti 3:5;
1Pt 1:3

3:22 Mk 16:19;
Ro 8:34;
Eph 1:20;
Heb 4:14

¹⁸Christ himself suffered on account of sins, once for all, the righteous one on behalf of the unrighteous. He did this in order to bring you into the presence of God. Christ was put to death as a human, but made alive by the Spirit. ¹⁹And it was by the Spirit that he went to preach to the spirits in prison. ²⁰In the past, these spirits were disobedient—when God patiently waited during the time of Noah. Noah built an ark in which a few (that is, eight) lives were rescued through water. ²¹Baptism is like that. It saves you now—not because it removes dirt from your body but because it is the mark of a good conscience toward God. Your salvation comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who is at God's right side. Now that he has gone into heaven, he rules over all angels, authorities, and powers.

3:18-22 The example of Christ is given for believers who are suffering under opposition (also 4:1). Christ didn't suffer because he was evil; rather, he suffered so that others might escape the power of sin (see 1 Pet 2:24-25). Furthermore, he was resurrected and is now at *God's right side*, where he reigns over all. In the same way, the wrongful suffering of Christians can bring people to faith (see 1 Pet 2:12; 3:1), and Christians can look ahead to the time when God will honor them for their faithfulness in the midst of wrongful suffering.

3:19 The identification of *the spirits in prison* is difficult. It may be that Peter draws on

the picture of disobedient spirits from a Jewish writing called 1 Enoch; if so Christ might be depicted as announcing his victory to fallen angels. Early church interpretation associated these *spirits in prison* with "the dead" to whom the good news was preached in 1 Peter 4:6. Christ, it was believed, descended into the place of the dead in order to declare victory over death and the devil.

3:20-21 Those saved with Noah during the flood are examples of righteous persons whom God saved through water. Similarly, believers in Jesus are saved through the water of baptism, which marks them as loyal to God.

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Mark 1:9-15

1:9 Mt 2:23,
Mt 3:13; Lk 3:21,
Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32

Jesus is baptized and tempted

⁹About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. ¹¹And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

1:10 Jn 1:32

1:11 Ps 2:7;
Is 42:1; Mt 3:17;
Mk 9:7

1:12 Mt 4:1;
Lk 4:1

1:13 Heb 4:15

¹²At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

1:14 Mt 4:12,
Mt 4:17, Mt 4:23

Jesus' message

¹⁴After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, ¹⁵saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

1:15 Mt 3:2;
Ac 20:21; Ga 4:4;
Eph 1:10

Faith/Trust These two words, along with "belief," are translated from the same Greek word, and they're an important concept in Mark's Gospel. Faith in Mark is active. It isn't simply believing in a set of doctrines; faith is about those things people entrust their lives with. Jesus urges people to "trust this good news" (Mark 1:15) about God's coming kingdom. And throughout the Gospel, he draws a close connection between faith/trust and the power of God at work in the world. When people act as if God's power is available through Jesus, they turn to him for healing (Mark 2:5; 5:34). When they're more skeptical or fail to believe, even he can't do much good (Mark 6:5-6). In Mark, Jesus calls for "faith in God" (Mark 11:22), not faith in himself (cf. John 20:30-31). But Jesus is God's Christ, the one who serves as an authorized agent of divine power. So people turn to him in faith when they trust that power—and they find life.

1:1 *good news*: The term "good news" (or "gospel") describes the message that follows in Mark. In the Roman world good news followed victory in battle or the birth of an emperor. Mark traces the good news back to the OT, especially to Isaiah: the good news of God's coming to reign (Isa 40:3-9; 52:6). See note on Mark 1:2. *about Jesus Christ*: or "of Jesus Christ." The good news includes Jesus' identity as the Christ, or "anointed one." It's also Jesus' good news, since it's the message of his ministry (see Mark 1:14-15). Jesus' identity as the Christ gives him a special role in announcing the revelation of God's kingdom on earth. *God's Son*: This phrase is missing in some early copies of Mark, but it plays an important role throughout the Gospel (Mark 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 14:61; 15:39).

1:9 *Nazareth of Galilee*: Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, is in the region of Galilee in modern-day northeastern Palestine. Jesus first appears in Mark as an adult.

1:10 *heaven splitting open*: Jesus' baptism bridges the gap between heaven and earth. Mark's language associates it with divine revelation (see Isa 64:1; 15:38). Later, in Mark 15:38-39, the ripping of the temple curtain precedes the centurion's confession of Jesus as God's Son.

1:11 *my Son, whom I dearly love*: See Mark 1:1; Psalm 2:7. In the OT the term "God's son" sometimes applied to kings, to the people of Israel, or to the faithful. For Mark's audience, the name designates Jesus' special role in God's coming kingdom (see Rom 1:1-4).

1:12-13 Mark's account of Jesus' time in the wilderness lacks the details found in the other Gospels (see Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

1:12 *At once*: Mark regularly uses phrases that convey the urgent nature of Jesus' ministry (see, for instance, Mark 1:18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43).

1:13 *forty days*: This length of time is important for Mark. In the OT the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt and before entering the promised land. *wild animals*: Jesus is apparently at ease in nature. Mark may be referring to the covenant promised in Hosea 2:18, where harmony with creation will be reestablished.

1:14-15 See Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-15. Mark summarizes Jesus' message.

1:14 *After... arrested*: Mark portrays Jesus as John's successor. Their ministries don't overlap. *God's good news*: Mark clarifies the content of that good news in Mark 1:15. See note on Mark 1:1.

1:15 *Now is the time!*: or "the time has been fulfilled." What people have been waiting for is now on the horizon. *God's kingdom*: See sidebar, "God's Kingdom" at Mark 3. *Change your hearts and lives*: Like John, Jesus calls for an active response to the good news. *trust this good news*: In Mark, Jesus builds people's trust in God and in the truth of God's kingdom (cf. John 20:30-31). See sidebar, "Faith/Trust" at Mark 11.

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