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## Noah Builds an Altar

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Lesson Scripture: Genesis 6:1–9: 17

Focus Scripture: Genesis 8:13-22: 9:11-13

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*Key Verse: (God said,) “I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” Genesis 9:13*

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GENESIS 8:13-22; 9:11-13 (NRSV UE)

### Genesis 8:13-22

13 In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth, and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and saw that the face of the ground was drying.

14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

15 Then God said to Noah,

16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.

17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

18 So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives.

19 And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humans, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living

GENESIS 8:13-22; 9:11-13 (KJV)

### Genesis 8:13-22

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons’ wives with thee.

17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;

creature as I have done.

22 As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.”

### 9:11-13

11 “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

12 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:

13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

### 9:11-13

11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

## KEY TERMS

- **Altar**—A table or flat-topped block used as the focus for a religious ritual, especially for making sacrifices or offerings to a deity.
- **Covenant** – An agreement; a legal contract.

## INTRODUCTION

As the narrative of human history continues to unfold, the common theme is that humanity is evil. There continues to be a lack of respect for God, other humans, and God’s creation. The story of Noah presents the purging of the wicked and a new opportunity for redemption. God selects Noah and his family to survive a cataclysmic natural disaster of a flood. Noah’s assignment is not only to build an ark to save his family,

but a structure large enough to hold vast numbers of animals until the waters have receded. God instructs Noah on the plan, who successfully completes the assignment and, ultimately, is able to step back onto dry land. In an act of gratitude, Noah builds an altar and sacrifices several of the choice animals at his disposal. This is the first mention of an altar in the Bible. Noah’s act of sacrifice is pleasing to God, resulting in a declaration of acceptance and a promise of continued provision and protection for Noah, his family, and the future of humanity.

## TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

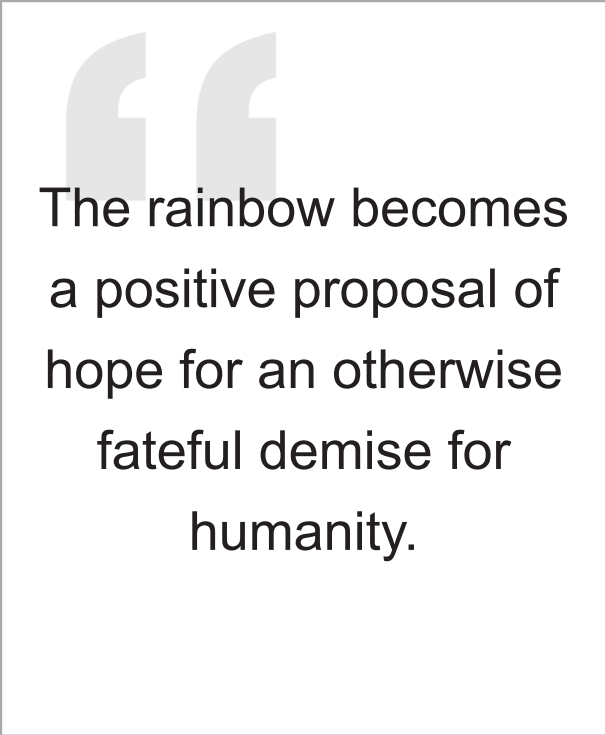
At this point of the narrative of Noah’s Ark, there is confirmation that the waters have receded, and it is safe for the occupants to leave the vessel. The realization that their lives have been spared is a reminder of God’s

mercy. God speaks to Noah (Gen. 8:15) as he has spoken to others throughout the history of his people. God is ever present, even in times of storms and crisis. God continues to direct, guide, instruct, protect and provide for his people. Noah listens to God, an act of obedience that is not apparent in the earlier stories of Genesis. Noah honors God through building an altar, a symbol of worship and gratitude. Noah selects only animals that are appropriate for a sacrifice. This act implies Noah's diligence in preparing a sacrifice that will be acceptable, one that expresses tremendous adoration to God. The use of only clean animals (v. 9) can also be found in Leviticus 1:9, as an offering of atonement, a specific act to acknowledge the sinful nature of humanity, and Noah's desire and attempt to move forward with repentance, humility, and obedience.

The Lord smells the aroma of the offering (Gen. 8:21), and it pleases the Lord. The Lord speaks to Noah again and echoes a repeated declaration of humanity's evil ways. Then, God declares a promise, a covenant not to destroy the earth in this way again. This covenant is not simply for Noah but for

all of humankind. God resonates with God's creation, indicating that God has always displayed acceptance and pleasure with God's creation, as found in the first creation narrative, that finds all aspects of creation as "good" (Gen. 1:31). Noah now represents humanity's response to God's mercy and love. Noah is informed that he and future generations will not endure this fate in the future, through the symbol of a rainbow. It represents the promise of God's love despite

human disobedience. Although the rainbow has been accepted and utilized as a symbol for many causes, the biblical theme of God's covenant promise of mercy still remains the antithesis symbol of this tragic narrative. The rainbow becomes a positive proposal of hope for an otherwise fateful demise for humanity. The rainbow intersects with not



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simply the covenant of mercy from natural physical tragedies, but also the covenant of redemption. In addition, the word "covenant" derives from the same root word meaning "to cut." In the Bible and other ancient cultures, a covenant carried weight and was often validated by cutting, and sealed in blood. Noah demonstrated a covenant agreement

with God, sealed in the sacrificial blood of an animal. God will ultimately provide a new covenant for humanity through the blood of Jesus Christ.

### SANKOFA

The concept of a rainbow has been embraced by many cultures and beliefs for its beauty, grandeur, and spiritual connectedness. Witnessing a rainbow over

the valleys and plains of Africa can be breathtaking, allowing the viewer to reflect on its meaning. This may be one reason why Bishop Desmond Tutu spoke of South Africans as the "Rainbow People of God." Clearly understanding the biblical meaning, Bishop Tutu also drew on the metaphoric principles of a rainbow as encompassing a diverse spectrum of colors and hues that originate from the heavenly realms. For South Africa to be termed

a rainbow nation is appropriate for a nation of incredibly colorful landscapes, cuisine, culture, racial and ethnic populations, and a rich and historic legacy. Certainly, the rainbows themselves cast magnificent arcs across valleys, mountains, and waterfalls that Since you are not doing this for the

money and justify this meaningful title. It also brings purpose to the South African people. For South African indigenous cultures, the rainbow is associated with hope and a bright future. Since the first post-apartheid children matured, there has been a mixture of a positive response to this label as well as criticism. Despite the need for positive


reflection and outcome to a very dark time, social disparities and economic struggles of South Africans remain. Those who challenge this term feel that it glosses over the historical impact of apartheid, suggesting talks of rainbows as another form of denial and an avoidance of responsibility. Some see it as propaganda which enables people and social leaders to ignore their difficult reality.

Following a turbulent history, forging a new perspective towards living and working together in harmony can be healthy and encouraging, moving South Africa to becoming an even stronger country than before.

However, there are many who see the rainbow metaphor as a positive step. Following a turbulent history, forging a new perspective towards living and working together in harmony can be healthy and encouraging, moving South Africa to becoming an even stronger country than before.

**CASE STUDY**

Rainbow Africa is a Christian charity committed to supporting communities through the provision of education, healthcare, training, and employment. Rainbow Africa works in partnership with local churches and community groups to present a practical demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in action. Established in 1996 in Livingstone, Zambia, Rainbow Africa is comprised of a team of trustees, workers, and volunteers helping those in need. For over 20 years, the organization has seen tremendous growth for Rainbow Trust Africa, a component that receives donations and gifts, along with an active prayer community. This has allowed them to transform many lives across Zambia. The faith and convictions of the participants is evident in their belief that they will see the goodness of God exemplified through the commitment of their teams and the outcome of transforming lives.



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of the fragile existence we have in the world. We are often witnessing natural disasters that adversely affect people of every ethnic background. Yet when the crisis passes, we have an opportunity to come together to rebuild, to express our gratitude for God's mercy, but also to pray for what the future holds. We recognize that the Lord rains on the just and unjust. We no longer can judge

others' fateful tragedies as a result of their own undoing. Instead, we must recognize that we have the ability to have hope in what the future holds and be grateful that we all have a promise of salvation through our relationship with Jesus. Each day allows us to see a rainbow of hope beyond the torrential floods of problems. This biblical narrative reminds us that 1) There is accountability when we sin; 2) God is still merciful; 3) We worship

our God through sacrifice, as a sign of our faith that can bring us through the storms of life.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Should South Africans embrace the term of being a rainbow nation?

**LIFE APPLICATION**

The story of Noah and the Ark reminds us

2. The United States was once called a melting pot. Is this term appropriate and what are the challenges this term poses to Americans today?

### CLOSING DEVOTIONS

#### Closing Hymn or Song of Praise

“One More Day” – Hymn #538, *African American Heritage Hymnal*

#### CLOSING PRAYER:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Lord, with our hearts lifted, we praise you for one more day, one more chance, one more blessing and sign of hope that you have been with us in the past, continue to be with us today, and will continue to sustain and keep us in the days to come. Thank you, Lord, for keeping us and we stand on your promise to never leave us or forsake us. This we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus the Christ. Amen.

### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 9-June 15

<b>Monday</b>	Genesis 17:15-22 (God Promises a Son)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Romans 4:1-15 (Abraham's Righteous Faith)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Romans 4:16-25 (Life Out of Death)
<b>Thursday</b>	Genesis 12:1-7 (A Blessing to the Nations)
<b>Friday</b>	Psalms 125–126 (Joy for Weeping)
<b>Saturday</b>	Hebrews 11:8-12 (Abraham's Courageous Faith)
<b>Sunday</b>	Genesis 22:1-14 (God Will Provide a Lamb)