

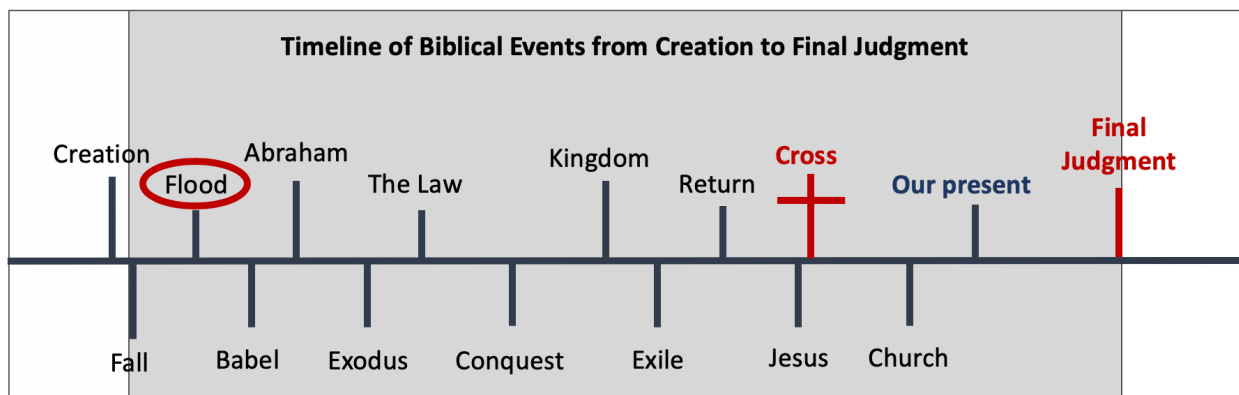
# Lesson 6: The New World Covenant

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## Previously...

We've learnt that God intends to judge the entire world, bringing an end to evil completely. Through the events of the global Flood, He showed how He would judge and save:

1. God provides a grace period before judgment comes. This is for people to change their minds and trust Him for the means of escape.
2. God is able to perfectly decide whom to save and whom to judge.
3. God provides only one way of salvation.
4. The world changes after the judgment.
5. The way to be saved is through faith in God.



The global Flood was a historical, worldwide judgment on everyone on earth. Only eight people, Noah and his family, trusted in what God said and they built and entered the ark. God saved them because they had faith in Him, and not because they were special or sinless. God sealed them in the ark and kept them safe. After the flood waters subsided, they were the only people left on earth. God would start again with them on an earth that was distinctly different now.

## After the Flood

After the global Flood, God spoke again to Noah. He said:

### Genesis 9:9–10

<sup>9</sup> "I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, <sup>10</sup> and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth."

A covenant is a **contract**. Covenants in the ancient world were made between families, nations, or between a king and his subjects. Although covenants were common in history, Yahweh is the only God who makes covenants with His people. There is no other religion in the world where the gods or goddesses make contracts with mankind.

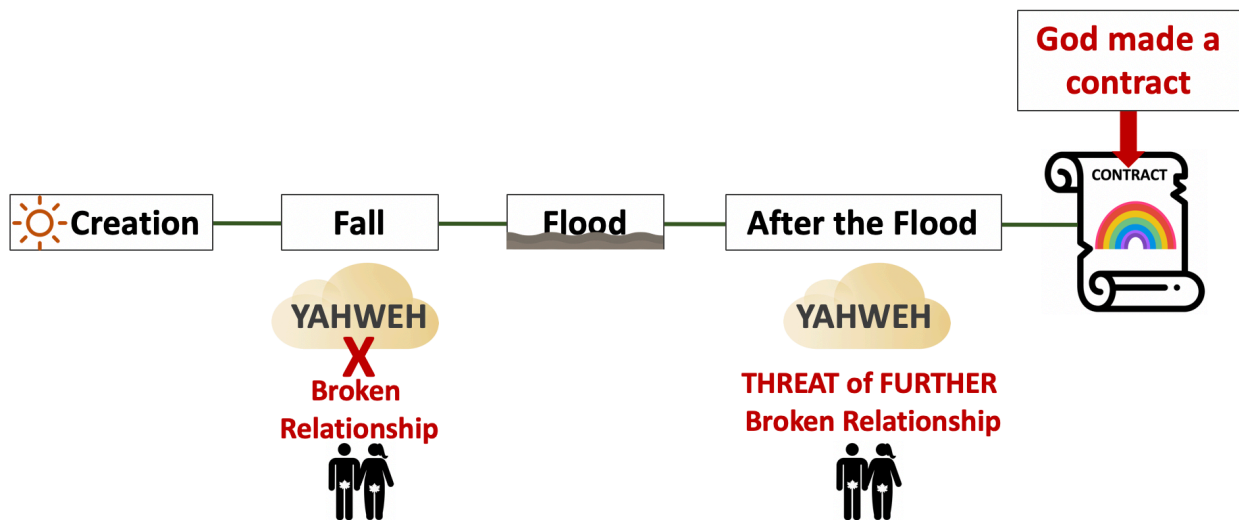


When do people typically make contracts? When:

- i. there has been a broken relationship in the past or
- ii. there is a threat of disagreement in the future.

This is why the first “contract” that God made was with Noah, not with Adam. A contract was only necessary:

- after the Fall (when mankind broke their relationship with God) and
- after the Flood (when there was a threat of further broken relationship in the future).



So God made a “peace contract” with man after His triumphant war over evil in the Flood.

We’re going to study this covenant to see what we can learn about God and our relationship with Him.



## 1. The Parties in the New World Covenant

This contract was made by God with:

- Noah and all his descendants
- All mankind and
- Animals (unlike future covenants, this New World Covenant includes all animals).

Look again at the two verses from Genesis 9.

**Genesis 9:9–10**

<sup>9</sup> “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, <sup>10</sup> and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth.

**2. The Signing of the New World Covenant**

Covenants or contracts are normally signed by the parties responsible for what has been promised. Typically, two or more parties would sign a contract. However, in this New World Covenant, **God alone signed it**. No one else. What does this mean? It means that **God alone was making the promises** and **God alone was responsible for fulfilling them**. No one else.

How did God “sign” the covenant?

**Genesis 9:12–15**

<sup>12</sup> Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. <sup>13</sup> I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life.

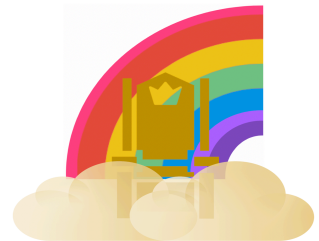


The rainbow was a sign or God’s “signature”! Why did God choose the rainbow? It is possibly because the rainbow is what surrounds God’s throne room and it represents His person, presence and glory!

For example, when God allowed the prophet Ezekiel to see His throne, this is what Ezekiel said about God:

**Ezekiel 1:28**

All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground, and I heard someone’s voice speaking to me.



And again, the apostle John who also saw a glimpse of God’s throne, had this to say:

**Revelation 4:3**

The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow.

Some Bible scholars think that before the Flood, there might have been no rainbows because there was probably no rain. The Bible says that when God created the world, He did not initially send rain.

**Genesis 2:4–6**

<sup>4</sup> This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup> neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup> Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land.

For rainbows to occur, there needs to be sunlight and water droplets in the sky of a certain size and shape. Only then could sunlight be split or refracted into the colours of the rainbow.

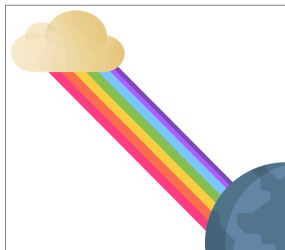
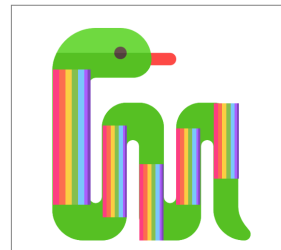
The significance of the rainbow is that it reveals some of God's glory! God used it in the New World to be a sign of His presence and of His promises found in this covenant.

**Isn't the rainbow a symbol of gay rights?**

Fallen man and Satan are always trying to suppress God's history and truth. They want to erase any memory or symbol of God. The true meaning of the rainbow, which is God's signature representing His throne and glory, has also been hijacked to mean other things.



Currently, the gay movement uses it as a symbol of gay pride. However, they are not the first people to assign a different meaning to the rainbow. Here are some examples:

**Norse Tradition****Some Chinese Traditions****Certain Native Peoples**

- In the old Norse tradition, the rainbow is believed to be a bridge connecting earth to the realm of the gods.
- Some Chinese traditions believe the rainbow is a double-headed dragon who is a mediator between heaven and earth, interceding with heaven on behalf of humans.
- There are Native peoples who believe the rainbow is a multicoloured serpent that is to be ridden during an initiation ceremony by a young brave. The journey would lead him to the spirit world where he could receive guidance.

As we remember that it is Yahweh, the Creator-God who put all nature in place, it would be good to rely on His revelation of why He created certain things. And we should also preserve this understanding and truth of God's history.





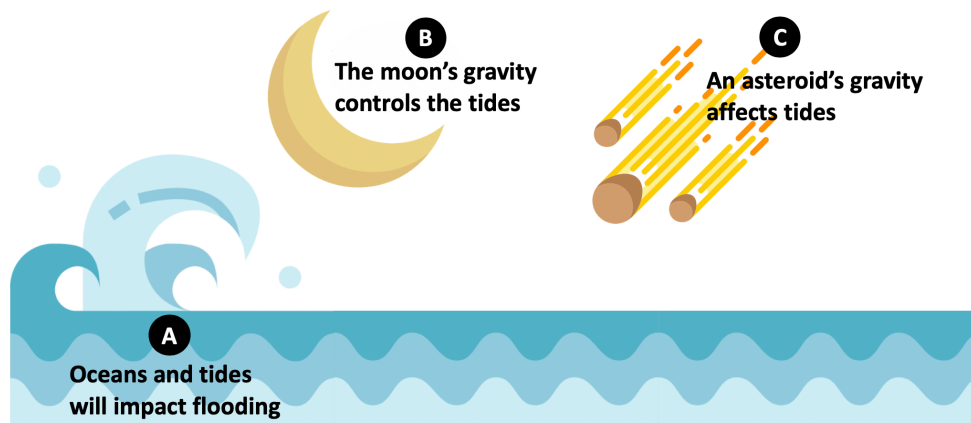
### 3. The Legal Terms of the New World Covenant

For any contract to be enforceable, the terms or conditions stated in the contract must be observable or “provable”. This means that people must be able to clearly see that the conditions in the agreement have been kept. What promises did God make in this contract or covenant?

#### Genesis 9:11, 16

<sup>11</sup> Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth. <sup>16</sup> When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.

God promised that there would never ever again be a global flood on the earth. Let’s think about this. For God to be able to make that promise, He really needed to be a God that had total and absolute control not just over the earth, but over the whole universe, including all chaos and evil. Why?



- A. The oceans and tides impact flooding, so God had to be in control of all the oceans of the world.
- B. Also, the moon’s gravity controls the tides. If God were only in charge of the earth, He would not be able to ensure that the moon’s gravity would not interfere with the earth and cause a global flood.
- C. In fact, if we think it through a little more, we would realise that God would have to be in control of the entire universe because He had to ensure that no other heavenly body’s gravity (like an asteroid flying too close to earth) would cause massive tides and thus global flooding.

Just being in control of a small part of nature was not enough for God to keep that promise. He has to be in charge of the whole universe in order to even make such a promise. God needs to be all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere present at the same time in order to keep this covenant.

Importantly, God's promise did not come with any conditions that say "IF you do this, THEN I will do that." God did not say that He would not send another global Flood only if the people were good.

In fact, even if they continued in their wicked ways, He would still keep His promise. God's promise was unconditional and not dependant on what man did or didn't do. This is what God said after Noah offered a sacrifice to Him.

Conditional Promise	Unconditional Promise
If you... then I will...	I will do it!

### Genesis 8:21

And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things.

Till today, all mankind can see and check God's behaviour and declare that He has indeed kept His promise. There has not been any other global flood. This is important because God Himself says that His own faithfulness in keeping this promise will be the reason why we can trust Him for all other promises that He makes.

### Isaiah 54:9–10

<sup>9</sup> "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth, so now I swear that I will never again be angry and punish you.  
<sup>10</sup> For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

In addition, God went on to promise that there would be stability and certainty in nature:

### Genesis 8:22

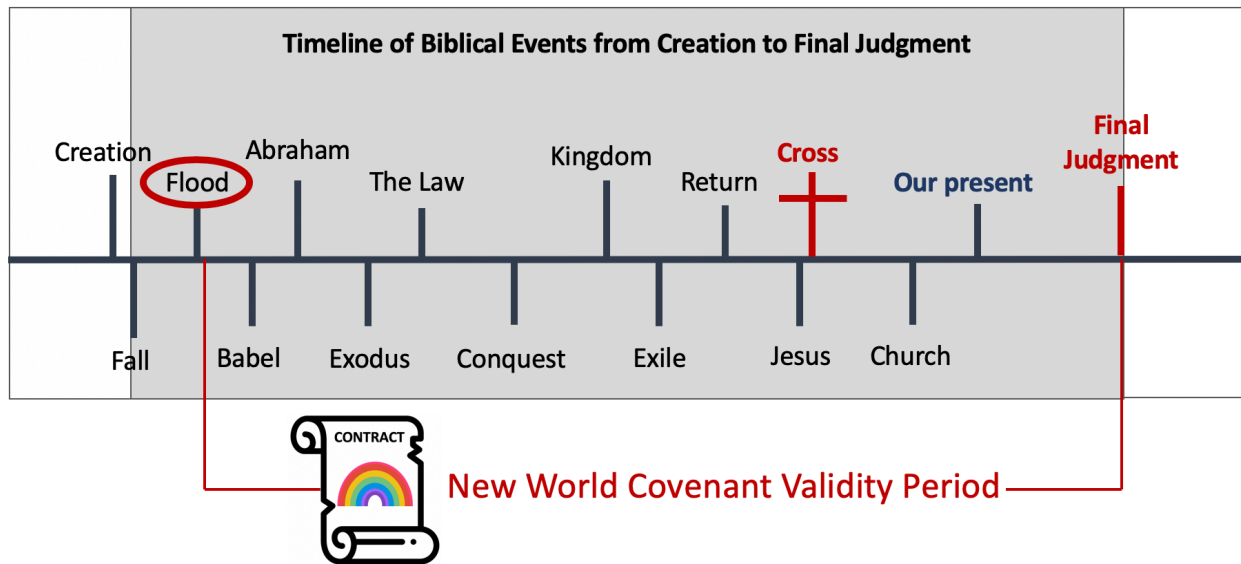
As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.

#### God promises stability and certainty in nature



Interestingly, it is because God keeps this promise and controls the stability of nature that the study of science is possible.

How long does God intend to keep this promise of stability in nature? God made this promise after the Flood. So it is valid from after the Flood till the final judgment. This promise is not meant for Eternity Future. We will study more about this as we go along. But for now, between the Flood and the return of Christ, God has put limits and controls on nature that cannot be violated.



### Summary of the New World Covenant

		<b>New World Covenant (Noahic Covenant)</b>
	<b>Parties</b>	God, mankind, animals
	<b>Signatories</b> (the one who signs)	God alone (with the rainbow)
	<b>Promises</b>	No future global floods
	<b>Type of Covenant</b>	Unconditional (God will keep His promise. It is not dependent on anything or anyone else.)

## Is there really a God? Isn't what we see in nature just "natural law"?

The pagan worldview believes in "natural law", that things simply are the way they are.

Biblical Creator-Creature Distinction	Pagan Worldview
1 <sup>st</sup> level CREATOR: Sustains Everything	<del>1<sup>st</sup> level CREATOR</del> <i>No such thing</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> level creature: nature, man	<del>2<sup>nd</sup> level creature: nature, man</del> <i>sustains itself naturally</i>

Because of this belief that nature somehow just sustains itself, the pagan worldview also promotes the idea that man is the cause of all environmental problems. In fact, the world would be a better place without man because man's lifestyle is the main reason for environmental impact and climate change.

However, the Bible makes it clear that it is Jesus who is intentionally holding everything together. God didn't create the world and then go on vacation. He continues to sustain everything that He created.

It is precisely because of God's promises and His New World Covenant that we have stability in the world today.

### Hebrews 1:3a

The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

### Colossians 1:15–17

<sup>15</sup> Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,

<sup>16</sup> for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

<sup>17</sup> He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

But exactly what does it mean that Jesus is sustaining everything? Interestingly, scientists have discovered some characteristics about the earth and universe, and if any of these were just a little different (either more or less), life would not be sustained on earth! But as they are right now, all these characteristics are at just the right level.

For example:

- The earth’s gravity
- The axial tilt of the earth
- The earth’s rotation period
- The earth’s magnetic field
- The thickness of the earth’s crust
- The oxygen/nitrogen ratio, carbon dioxide, water vapour and ozone levels
- The colour of the sun
- The mass of the sun
- The earth’s distance from the sun

There are many of these characteristics or “constants” in the universe that are just at the right level to allow mankind to live, breathe and survive. If these “constants” were at a different level, life would not be possible. The Bible tells us it is Jesus who is sustaining these “constants”.


In fact, God Himself promised that He will control the climate and environment so that while the earth is around, mankind will have food to eat.

**Genesis 8:22a**

As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest,



People who ignore God and don’t give Him thanks for sustaining the earth don’t stop there. They often take things further. These are some of the ideas they promote:

 <b>God Says</b>	 <b>Pagan Worldview Says</b>
<p>I’m sustaining the world and everything in it.</p>	<p>Man can and must act to save the world to survive! There is no God!</p>
<p>I promise that the earth will always be able to grow food.</p>	<p>We’re all going to starve to death because of climate change!</p>
<p>Man caused the fall of nature when man sinned against Me and fell.</p>	<p>Man’s lifestyle choices are destroying nature.</p>
<p>Man is more valuable to Me than nature. I created nature for man.</p>	<p>Nature is more valuable than man. We must limit our population to save nature.</p>

The non-biblical perspective and worldview can be easily found everywhere: schools and the academic world, newspapers and television, even social media. As believers in the Creator-God who never lies, it would be wise for us to think about what we are reading, watching or listening.

Before we accept anything as truth or fact, we should check what God has told us in His Word. And then ask ourselves if God can be trusted. With every piece of information that we receive, we need to compare it to God's Word and then decide if we believe God or something else.

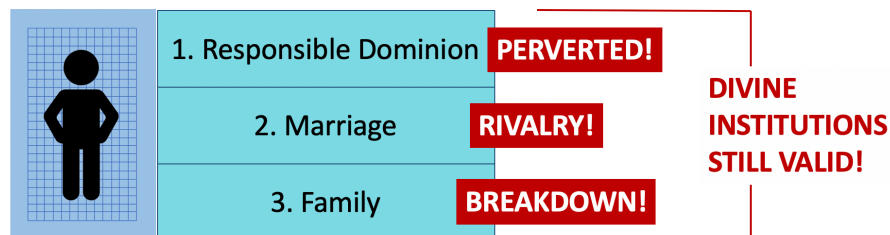
Does God tell us how nature and this earth will end? Yes, He does. In His Word recorded for us, God Himself will destroy this earth. It will not be destroyed by irresponsible man. We will learn more about God's plan for the future in later lessons.

## The Reinstalled Divine Institutions

God gave the divine institutions to all mankind as a basic social structure. It was for man to live well and thrive.

When mankind fell, people became abnormal and the divine institutions given by God were ruined. However, God did not remove the institutions.

### God's Instructions after the Flood



People were still supposed to exercise responsible dominion, looking to God as their Creator and being a responsible under-lord over God's creation. Marriage was still supposed to be between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and successfully exercising responsible dominion as a team. And family was still for the purpose of training and effectively raising children to responsibly care for the world under God. But what happened to the divine institutions after the Flood?



## First Divine Institution: Responsible Dominion

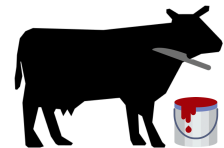
When God made His covenant with the new world, He reinstated the role of man. But there were some differences in what He told Noah compared with what He told Adam and Eve.

Genesis 1:28–30 (God told Adam)	Genesis 9:1–4 (God told Noah)
<p><sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”</p> <p><sup>29</sup> Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing <u>plant</u> throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will <u>look on you with fear</u> and terror. I have placed them in your power. <sup>3</sup> I have <u>given them to you for food</u>, just as I have given you grain and vegetables.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.</p>

God told mankind that they would now eat animals and living things. Man would no longer just have plants for food. And animals would now be afraid of man. This meant that unlike before the Fall, animals would now flee from man’s presence. This was probably to prevent man from eating all the friendly animals at once!





Though man could now eat animals, God still wanted man to have respect for life. These animals’ lives belonged to God. People were not allowed to coldheartedly eat meat that still had blood in them. By making mankind drain out the blood before eating, it made people very much more aware and conscious that an animal had died so that they could eat and live.



Why did God do this? Perhaps God was planting a very visual image in our everyday lives: each time meat was eaten, it would be a reminder that a sacrificial death occurred for man so that man could live.

Interestingly, this foreshadowed what Jesus would later do for man. Jesus would die for man as a substitute so that man could live. Man need not die the Second Death.

 <p>Reminder of a <b>sacrificial death</b>: an animal died so that man can eat and live.</p>	 <p>Jesus’ <b>sacrificial death</b>: Jesus will die so that man can live.</p>
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## Is it cruel to eat animals? Is being a vegetarian better?

Today, we hear that being vegetarian is better for us and kinder to animals. Some also say that eating meat is harmful and evil. If God told man they should be eating meat, then where did this idea come from? The apostle Paul said that this whole idea comes from the devil.



### 1 Timothy 4:1–5

<sup>1</sup> Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons.

<sup>2</sup> These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.

<sup>3</sup> They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth.

<sup>4</sup> Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. <sup>5</sup> For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.

Satan is still trying to undermine or go against everything that God has put in place. Even in a seemingly “trivial” matter such as food, Satan puts in his own anti-God ideas by attacking the eating of meat.



## Does this mean that every Christian must eat meat?

No. If people say they don't eat meat because they don't like the taste or because their doctor advised against it for health reasons, there is no spiritual problem with that.

However, if Christians say they believe or feel that eating meat is cruel and Christians should not eat meat, this would be a problem. Why?

First, it ignores the fact that when God gives an instruction to all mankind, He has very specific reasons for doing so. For centuries before the Flood God had accepted animal sacrifices (both body and blood) in worship of Himself (Genesis 4:4). The new command to eat meat required a worship-like action of giving back to God the blood of the animal killed. It created a worshipful moment for the people to realise that a life had been given for them to live. So people who go against God's instruction have elevated their own judgment above Him. They have made their opinion the ultimate authority and are judging God. This is rebellion and sin.

Second, what often motivates this kind of thinking is the belief that animals have the same rights as man (the continuity of being idea). They do not. In God's created order, man is made in the image of God, animals are not. God gave animals to man for food. Elevating animals to be equal to (or above) man goes against God's design. This is rebellion and sin.

The real issue is not just about food choices. It is about what is motivating the choice and whether that is a spiritual problem or not. Let us be careful and not casually accept the latest thinking or trends without first understanding the biblical point of view on matters.





## Second Divine Institution: Marriage

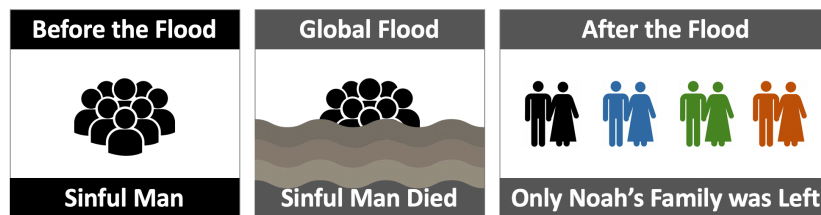
Genesis 1:28 (God told Adam)	Genesis 9:1 (God told Noah)
<p>Then God blessed them and said, “<u>Be fruitful and multiply</u>. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”</p>	<p>Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “<u>Be fruitful and multiply</u>. Fill the earth.</p>

After the Flood, marriage was to continue. The people in the ark repopulated the earth. It is from them that everyone in the world came from. However, just like it was after the Fall, instead of happy partnerships between husband and wife in a marriage, conflict and the struggle for power continued.



## Third Divine Institution: Family

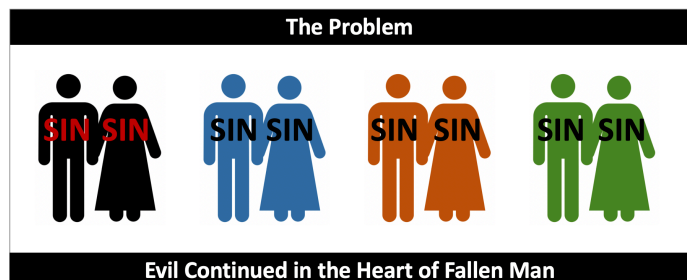
After the Flood, the divine institution of family was to continue as well. From Noah’s family came 70 nations (Genesis 10).



God still intended the family to be a place of harmony and the training ground for children. Parents were to provide authority and love. They were responsible for the care and training of their children.

But again, just like it was after the Fall, even after the Flood, families were chaotic, rebellious, irresponsible, mean and unkind. Noah’s family was no exception. Even though Noah and his family understood good and evil and the effects of sin and had experienced God’s judgment and His deliverance, his family was still dysfunctional.

This was the problem: the Flood got rid of the evil people in the ancient world, but evil continued in the heart of fallen man. And God wanted us to know that. In fact, God put a rather embarrassing account in the Bible to make the point.



**Genesis 9:20–25**

<sup>20</sup> After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. <sup>23</sup> Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

<sup>24</sup> When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. <sup>25</sup> Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!  
May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

The science of growing grapes and turning them into wine is quite complex. One has to know about the type of grape to use, the best soil for the vineyards, the weather conditions needed, fermentation, and more. Though not stated in the Bible, it's reasonable to think that God had given Noah the knowledge and wisdom to know how to cultivate the ground and make it fruitful. (It would be similar to the way that God interacted with Adam and Eve in the garden.)



God had given wine to man as a blessing, for happiness and health.

**Psalms 104:14–15**

<sup>14</sup> You cause grass to grow for the livestock  
and plants for people to use.  
You allow them to produce food from the earth—  
<sup>15</sup> wine to make them glad,  
olive oil to soothe their skin,  
and bread to give them strength.



However, wine, like everything else that God gave, must be used wisely and according to God's instructions.

**Ephesians 5:18**

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Noah was not sinless nor was he immune to disobeying God's instructions. Ham, also, instead of honouring his father and discretely covering him, went to announce Noah's nakedness to his brothers. This brought Noah shame. God wants us to know through this account that the sin nature that prompted Him to destroy the earth with the Flood continued to be present in Noah's family. The Flood would not be enough to get rid of evil in the world for good. God would have to do something else in the future to get rid of evil permanently.

## Was Noah unfair to (i) lay a curse and (ii) worse still, lay it on his grandson Canaan?

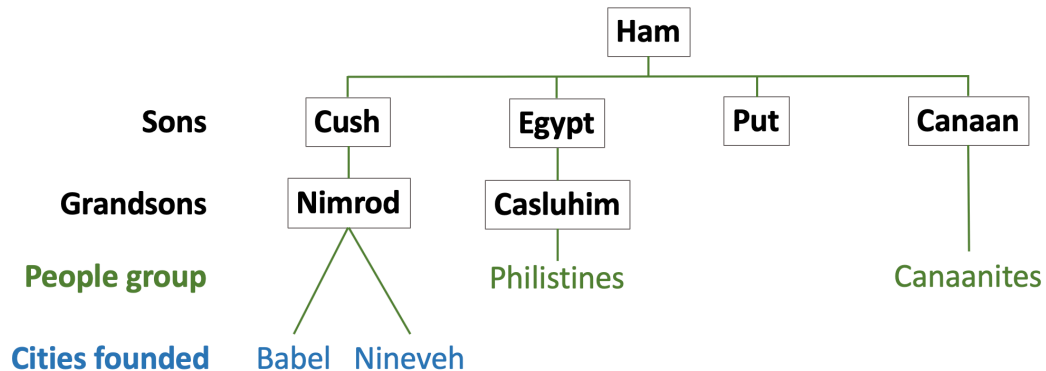
It's intriguing to note that in the account of Ham discovering his father naked while drunk, Noah ends up cursing Canaan, Ham's son. Why is Noah so harsh as to pronounce a curse and put the curse on Ham's son?

In families of that time, just seeing one's father naked was a breach of good family behaviour. The importance and holiness of a family was shattered and the strength of the father was mocked if he were seen naked. So, Ham, by his actions, had shamed his father. If he had accidentally seen his father naked, then as a good son, he should have simply covered up his father and left. Instead, he made matters worse by telling his brothers about it. It was as if he had won a victory over his father.

When Noah discovered what had happened, he spoke like a prophet and placed a future curse on Ham's family. He foretold that down through the generations, Ham's sinful behaviour would be magnified in his family.

**Turn to:** Genesis 10

Verses 6–20 lists Ham's descendants, and it is not a pretty picture.



Ham's sons are Cush, Egypt (also known as Mizraim), Put and Canaan. Cush would be the father of Nimrod, who was responsible for the rebellious city of Babel. He also went on to Assyria and built Nineveh, an evil city that God would destroy later on in history.

Egypt would be the ancestor of the Egyptians, the pagan nation that became the evil superpower of the time. He was also ancestor to the Philistines, another evil people group.

But most interestingly, Canaan would be the ancestor of several people groups who would reside in the Promised Land. Their wickedness and evil would grow and grow through the generations. Eventually, their sinfulness would be so great, God would judge them. He would direct the nation of Israel to be His instrument of judgment and destroy them.

When God revealed His history to Moses and he recorded it in the book of Genesis, this account of Canaan was put into Scripture. This was background information that God wanted the nation of Israel to understand, to prepare them for the upcoming war of judgment they would have when they invaded Canaan, the Promised Land. We will learn more about this in later lessons.

So Noah was not reacting in anger. Rather, he was acting as God's prophet, announcing future events.

## A New, Fourth Divine Institution

After the Flood, God kept the original three Divine Institutions. However, He also added a new one.

### Genesis 9:5–6

<sup>5</sup> “And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. <sup>6</sup> If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image.

God gave mankind the authority to take a man’s life as punishment for murder. In other words, God transferred the task of capital punishment to man.

Life is very important to God. For animals, God commanded man to honour the animal’s life during the eating of meat. However, man is of even greater importance than animals in God’s eyes because humans are made in the image of God. Therefore, man’s life is to be honoured more highly. Whether an animal or man kills a man, the penalty is death—the killer’s life is taken away. This is because the killer has destroyed an image of God.



Before the Flood, God did not make such a requirement. That is why when Cain killed Abel, God banished him but did not put him to death. In fact, God protected him from being put to death.

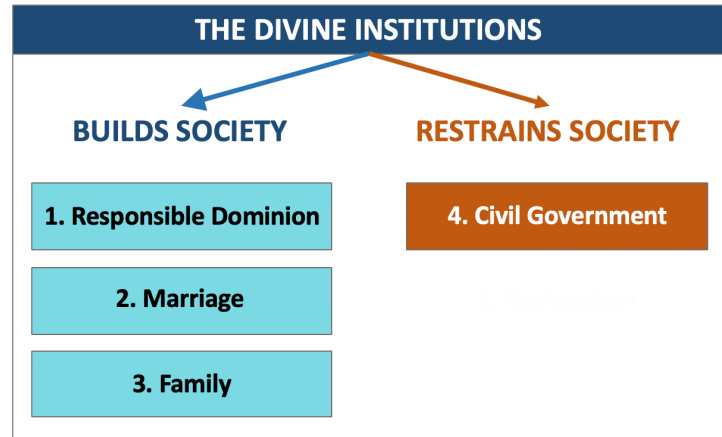
### Genesis 4:10–15

<sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup> Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. <sup>12</sup> No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup> Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! <sup>14</sup> You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!” <sup>15</sup> The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him.

After the Flood, when God gave mankind the authority to take away a killer's life (by enacting capital punishment), He was essentially giving man the ability to create civil government.

How so? This was because man would need a system to establish the guilt of the killer and to administer capital punishment responsibly. There needed to be an organised structure to maintain order in society. God's command for capital punishment could not be enacted randomly by just any independent volunteer. Hence, God was instructing man to create governments with the authority to punish those who do evil.



Why was Yahweh doing this? God was putting restraints to limit evil within society. The realities of a fallen world include the presence of sin and all kinds of evil. God now gave mankind a restraining divine institution to deal with these realities of evil.

A restraining divine institution was only necessary after the Fall. Before the Fall, when man was innocent, there was no need for man to have such authority.

### Would a loving and forgiving God actually install capital punishment? Isn't capital punishment something believers should fight against as it is barbaric, unnecessary and unjust?

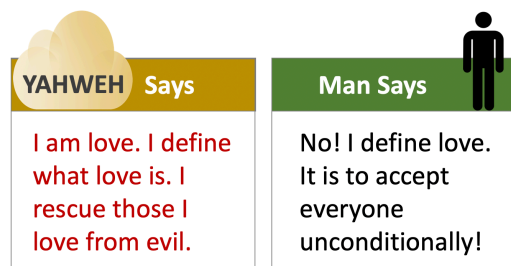
Because Yahweh is a loving God, He hates sin and evil. He hates it when people are abused, victimised, threatened, cheated, robbed, injured and murdered. This is how He feels about sin and sinners.

#### Psalm 7:11

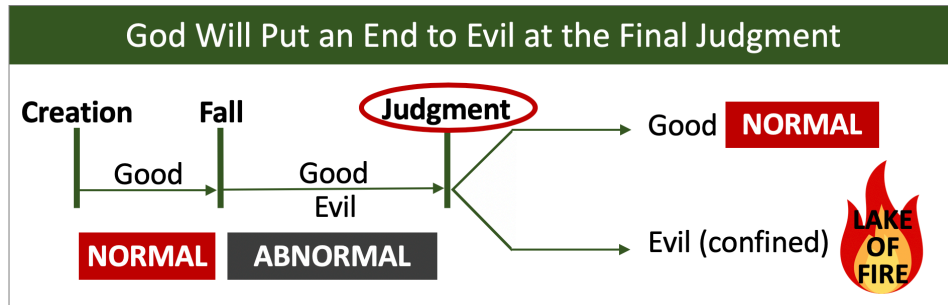
God is an honest judge.

He is angry with the wicked every day.

Some people have the man-made idea that to "love" means to accept unconditionally and then they apply this idea to God. They forget that God is love (1 John 4:16) and He is the One who defines what love is. Love is the essence of His being. And one way that He loves is by protecting and rescuing those He loves from evil. This means stopping the ones who are committing evil.



It is precisely because God is love that He will get rid of all sin, evil, pain and suffering one day. And the rebellious God-haters who thrive on sin and evil will be eliminated.

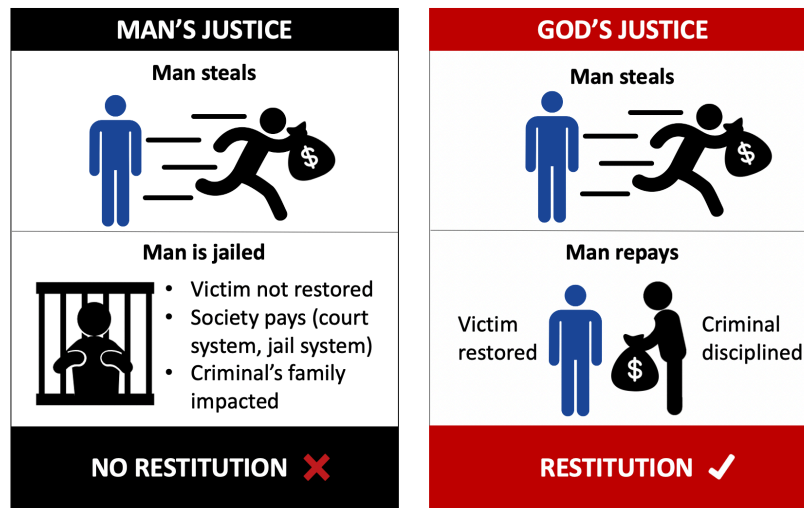


God helps us understand more of His thinking regarding crime when He gave the Mosaic Law. Within the Mosaic Law, God has laws on restitution, meaning to return things to the original owner and to compensate for any loss (Exodus 21:33–22:15). For example, when someone steals an ox, the punishment would be to repay oxen to the one he stole from. This is very fair and just.

Contrast this with how many nations today deal with theft in this scenario:

- i. The thief is thrown into jail, meaning he cannot earn a living to support his family.
- ii. While in jail, the state has to house and feed him, taking up taxpayers' money.
- iii. The thief's family often suffers from lack of income and has to go on welfare, using up even more taxpayers' money.
- iv. The victim doesn't get his stolen property back.
- v. The victim claims insurance for his loss, meaning insurance buyers all fund his claim.

This way of dealing with theft penalises the entire society.



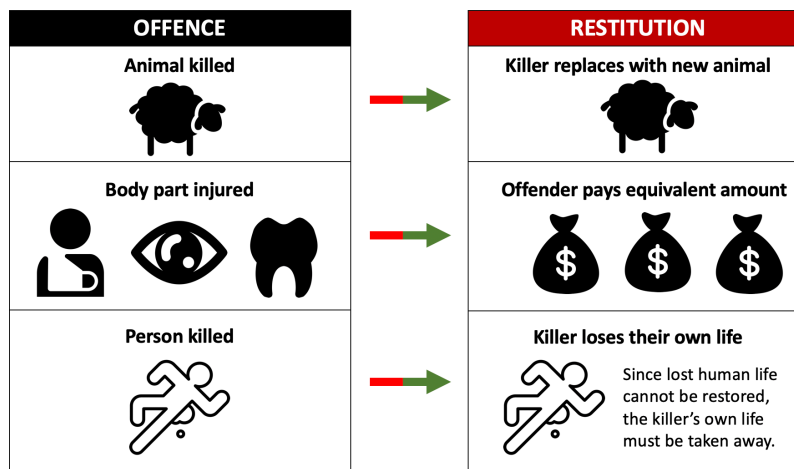
On the other hand, God's law does not put the thief out of work but instead, forces him to pay for his crime. That is what God considers just. The person who committed the crime pays for it himself.

God's laws are also based on the principle of the punishment being fair and not overly severe. This is what God said:

### Exodus 21:23–25

<sup>23</sup> But if there is further injury, the punishment must match the injury: a life for a life, <sup>24</sup> an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, <sup>25</sup> a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.

#### What Justice means to Yahweh



Some people misunderstand that this passage is teaching retaliation. It is not. It is talking about appropriate, fair and equal-value punishment for the crime committed. (Compare this law with Lamech's overreaction to an injury against him in Genesis 4:23–24.)

Using this principle, in the case of a murder, what does restitution look like? The dead person's life cannot be restored. In this case, the appropriate, fair and equal-value punishment is taking away the killer's life. That is why God demands capital punishment. That is what God deems fair and just.

To help limit evil and deal with the realities of sin in a fallen world, God gave man civil government with the ability to deliver capital punishment. This is so that mankind can deal with the evil. This is what the Creator-God says:

### Romans 13:1–2, 4 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>4</sup> For the

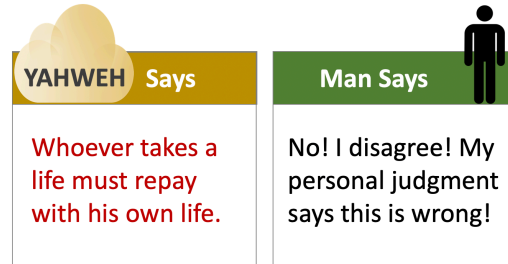


one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

God gave government power to take the life of murderers so that the lives of others may be saved. God knew the kind of evil society we would live in and put in place controls that would limit evil. In other words, God gave man civil government to limit evil.

But people always think they know better and many churchgoers prefer to use personal judgment to disagree with what God says. They prefer to make themselves the ultimate authority on this matter instead of submitting to God's authority.

Here are some common arguments against capital punishment, both "executions" and "just war" along with some brief thoughts to ponder.



## Common arguments against capital punishment

### 1. God first told Noah about capital punishment in the Old Testament. Times have changed.

In the New Testament book of Romans, Paul wrote that God still gives civil governments the power to punish evil. The symbol of the government is the sword, a weapon for killing. God's Word stands and His purpose for governments to stop evil is applicable even now.

### 2. Capital punishment does not discourage evil from occurring.

Capital punishment would discourage evil if it were done in the way God intended: (i) fair and (ii) quick.

The principles God gave for handling such matters are that first, it should be fair: there needs to be evidence and no murderer should escape punishment.

#### Numbers 35:30–31

<sup>30</sup> "All murderers must be put to death, but only if evidence is presented by more than one witness. No one may be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

<sup>31</sup> Also, you must never accept a ransom payment for the life of someone judged guilty of murder and subject to execution; murderers must always be put to death.

Although not for the crime of murder, looking at how Yahweh dealt with Achan's sin (Joshua 7:10–26), it also appears important that for capital punishment to be a deterrent, sin must be dealt with quickly. At the battle of Jericho, God had instructed the Israelites not to take any spoil. But Achan disobeyed God, stealing silver and a cloak. God dealt with the matter immediately by first causing the Israelites to falter at the initial attack on the next city, Ai.



Then God told Joshua to call for a hearing to establish guilt and after Achan was pronounced guilty, God instructed Joshua to put Achan to death. God did this so that all Israel would know how serious He was that they obey Him completely. God's actions produced immediate effect. In the second attack on Ai, no Israelite disobeyed Yahweh's instructions.

If capital punishment were carried out as God intended, which is fairly and quickly, then it would be a deterrent to crime.

Unfortunately, in many nations, the way man treats capital punishment does not act as a deterrent because the sentence is delayed by years or even decades and is carried out only after numerous painful and expensive court appeals. The sense of stopping evil and the sense of justice is lost in this process.

Nevertheless, it does not invalidate God's intent for capital punishment. God's justice demands that crime be paid for.

### **3. It cannot be administered fairly (poor or powerless people can't defend themselves against the rich or powerful.)**

God gave this new institution to a fallen world, not a perfect one. So God believes it is necessary, even if it is not carried out with complete fairness all of the time. (As an aside, Jesus Himself died in a totally unfair and unjust way under this law that God gave, yet God still gave the power of capital punishment to governments.)

### **4. It's not very "Christian".**

How did the apostles in the early church view or treat the role of the government and capital punishment? They agreed to it.

When charges were brought against the apostle Paul, he not only affirmed the role of civil government, he affirmed capital punishment. This is what he said:

#### **Acts 25:11**

If I have done something worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!"

And separately, with regards to "just war", John the Baptist saw the military as a legitimate profession. He did not tell soldiers to quit their jobs or find another profession because their work was unchristian. Instead, this is what he said when soldiers asked him how they should live as soldiers.

#### **Luke 3:14**

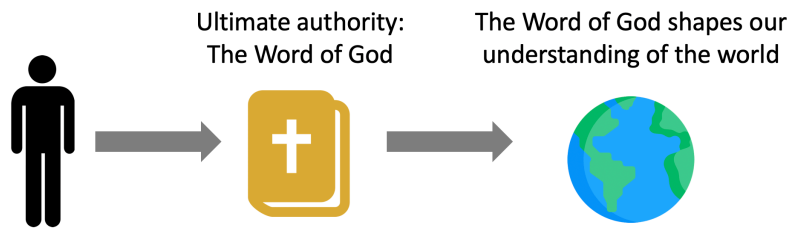
"What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay."

No one likes capital punishment, but this is what God had put in place for the fallen world.

Governments and their ability to impose capital punishment, even in a fallen imperfect state, have in fact, limited the amount of evil mankind can do. Without governments and capital punishment, evil would have spread even faster.

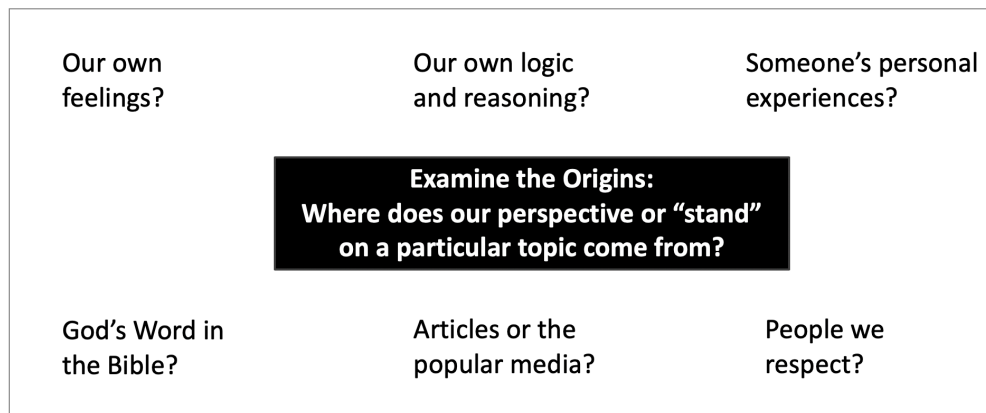
This topic is emotional and divisive even among churchgoers.

Importantly, as believers, regardless of what topics we are dealing with, let us commit to the Word of God as the ultimate authority and ask the Holy Spirit's help to understand God's point of view. We want God's Word to shape our understanding of the world.










If we already have a “stand” or conviction on an issue, we need to sincerely ask ourselves how we arrived at that. Is our “stand” based on God’s Word and clear Bible passages we can refer to time and time again? Have we made God our ultimate authority?

Or have we allowed our own feelings, personal experiences or popular media to shape us? It would be good for us to remember that as fallen people living in a fallen world, we should not build our theology or make a stand based on subjective, fallen experiences. Let us instead turn to the God of the Bible and allow Him to give us His perspective.



### Summary of the Divine Institutions

Institution	 Creation	 After the Fall	 After the Flood
 1. Responsible Dominion	Take care of the earth (under God's leadership).	Man fights against God's leadership and abuses nature.	Man fights against God's leadership and abuses nature.
 2. Marriage	Loving partnership: Multiply and fill the earth.	Conflict: husband and wife fight for control and suffer in their relationship with each other.	Conflict: husband and wife fight for control and suffer in their relationship with each other.
 3. Family	Train the children and family in the way of God.	Dysfunctional: family members are rebellious, disrespectful and mean towards each other.	Dysfunctional: family members are rebellious, disrespectful and mean towards each other.
 4. Civil Authority to take life	-	-	Given to sinful man to limit evil.

The post-flood world was very different from the pre-flood world. Man needed to start over after the global judgment. But they did not have to live in fear of another global flood. The Creator-God made a covenant with all of mankind and all the animals. He would keep the earth running in a regular, predictable way so that mankind could fulfil their mission of being the under-lord of all creation. Man could rest on God's promise of keeping the earth stable. This covenant promise is still in place today.

In our own lives, we can test God's faithfulness by observing His behaviour throughout history. His record of keeping this promise gives us evidence that He is trustworthy. And He wants us to know that because He remains trustworthy in that promise, we can also trust His other promises that He has recorded in Scripture. They are there for us to review and check. That is the kind of God He is—a God with a verifiable history.

## Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. Why do you think God would sign a covenant with man and nature and bind Himself to the terms of the agreement? And why do man and nature not have any obligations in the covenant?
2. The Bible tells us that God is the one who installs civil authorities. So what about authorities or governments who are evil? Did God install those? If so, why would He do that?
3. We see that capital punishment is the fourth divine institution. As Christians, should we still support this? Is it meant for our modern-day society?



Pre-reading for next lesson: Genesis 4, 10:1–12:9