
INTO THE NEW CREATION

Genesis 9

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In 1939, one of the most iconic movies in entertainment history hit the big screen, The Wizard of Oz. A classic tale of good versus evil. A young girl's search for her way back home. It was the company's will to hide the door opening moment from the public view until it originally aired. It was to grab the emotion and exhilaration of the audience as the movie moves from black and white to color. After the tornado suddenly stills and drops the house, Dorothy arises to walk out the door. The opens to a whole new world. This one is arrayed with vibrant colors, elaborate landscapes, and beautifully multicolored brick roads. As she strolls out of the old into the new, she says, "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." And soon after quipped, "We must be over the rainbow!" It would have been great to end Dorothy's story there, out from the old and into the new. But even in the land of Oz, with all its beauty, all is not right. Evil still exists. Dorothy's iconic statements upon seeing Oz, in a sense capture the experience Noah and his family may have felt once they exited the ark. And Like Oz, all is not right in the new creation either. Even with God initiating a command and a promise in the new creation, sin still lives.

Let's bring to where we are this morning. Noah has seen the devastation of sin and judgment in the world through the Flood. After a year in the ark, the door opens, and they step out into a new creation. They enter a world no man has ever seen before. In humility Noah responds in worship. He is fully aware of his own sinfulness. And yet, God granted him and his family mercy and forgiveness. And God is pleased with his sacrifice. This is where begin. Let's pray.

NOAH AND HIS GOD

(v.1-17)

It appears Genesis 1-8 is a brief summary of the history of the world. Sin enters the world. Sin is judged. The Christ-figure saves His chosen ones and brings them into the new creation. The gospel in a nutshell. Now we move into the unfolding of God's detailed story.

Let's read Genesis 9:1-7:

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

*² 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. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ **But** you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.*

⁵ 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.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."

FOR THE PROPAGATION OF HUMAN LIFE

(v.1-4)

First, don't miss this small phrase here, "And God blessed Noah." This is reminiscent of the woman in Luke 11:27-28 who heard the words of Christ and says, "***Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!***" ***But he (Jesus) said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*** So, Noah, hearing the word of God, keeps it. Thus, God blesses him. Obedience brings blessing. But be careful with that statement though. One could conclude if not careful, Noah earned his righteousness.

But we cannot negate the rest of scripture. Hebrews 11:7 reminds us: "***It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.***" By faith Noah receives the blessing. Belief precedes obedience. You obey what you believe. Noah heard, believed, and obeyed.

Now the command, "be fruitful and multiply". This phrase book ends this section highlighting its theme. In the face of the great destruction and loss of life in the Flood, God gives commands that have at their core the honor and value He has given to life. Even though "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth", God stills values human life. Destroying all mankind did not eradicate the problem. God knows the problem is much deeper. And Noah and his family will soon realize, the same thing. Therefore, for man to have any hope, God must intervene. He does so by first commanding Noah to populate the earth and disperse.

God begins to bring order back into the chaos. He institutes two changes to the relationship between man and creature. First, is fear. The animal kingdom will now fear, (or better, be in terror) humans. Since there will be a great number of animals who will multiply and spread, they could constitute a real threat to mankind. Thus, eating meat may have been God's way of limiting the spread of animals to the point they become a dominant force in the world. Natural controls to environmental threats.

The second change comes in the form of food. God says "I give you everything" to eat. This now includes meat. Now, I want to take a moment here to point out that there is nothing spiritual about being a vegetarian or following any fad diet claiming to eat the way God originally intended. Not eating meat is covered under liberty, but it is the limitation of being the weaker brother.

Let me remind of 1 Timothy 4:1-5 where Paul writes,

"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. ² These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. ³ 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. ⁴ Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. ⁵ For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer."

When we attempt to emulate life as it were in the garden or before the Flood, we are missing the point of the text. We equate the diet of the antediluvian period as the secret to living a long healthy life as if they had the secret. But this line of thinking is off because the whole creation was entirely different back then. We will never be able to duplicate that same environment no matter what we do or what we eat. It's a desire to return to the old. Dietary regulations are not the point of the text. God is bringing order into the new creation with limitations and allowances. This will allow man to flourish in the fallen world.

We also see the protection of human life instituted. It would be understandable for Noah to interpret the Flood as though God holds human life with little regard. So, God institutes a universal law for all humankind, believing and unbelieving.

GOD'S REQUIREMENT

God's requirement is that any human or animal that takes human life should be punished. There is a reckoning to be made. Here is the institution of the sword of justice in the hands of human government. God authorizes capital punishment for capital crimes. No excuses. It is a means to restrain the sin of man as expressed in the murder by Cain and the side-spread of violence before the Flood. In the new creation, human life is to be protected; even if the world is still fallen.

GOD'S REASON

Human life is still precious to God because humankind is made in the image of God. The difference between man and animals is not self-awareness or soul – it is that we are image bearers. Murder then is a striking out at the image of God in man. Essentially striking out against God. We preserve and protect human life, not because it is sacred, but because it represents the life and image of God.

So, God puts into place commands which are organize corporate life together and orients that life towards God. The life of humans, made in the image of God, are to be honored by propagation, provision, and protection.

THE COVENANT WITH NOAH

(v.8-17)

Now that God has commanded Noah on what he is to do, God is now going to tell Noah what God himself will do. Let's pick up verse 8.

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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." ¹² 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: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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."

ITS SIGNIFICANCE

ITS PLACE

After establishing order in the new creation, God promises to restrain His divine power. He does so through a covenant. This is the character of God, operating through promises. This will be the first recorded covenant in scripture. When you look at this text it's wordiness and repetition stand out to you. As one author puts it, "This

repetition is like a cathedral bell ringing out again and again, reverberating into the future, that God is committing himself to all his living creatures while the earth lasts.”¹ Our faith rests on the promises of God. Here is one of the earliest ones. To this day it stands.

ITS PURPOSE

This covenant serves as a model of how God also will preserve and protect life. Having experienced the judgment of God and moving into a new world, Noah and his family are promised and are assured that kind of judgment will not fall again. As a result, Israel, in hearing of this covenant with Noah, gains confidence in God. They now have a hope for the future amid moving from the old world of Egypt into the new world of Canaan. Rest assured, God makes and keeps His promises. Often, He does so in greater ways than the covenant itself might seem. This should encourage us and cause us to move forward into the new with faith in Him.

IT’S SIGNATORIES

Covenants have the people or parties to the covenants. They are its signatories. The Noahic Covenant is a unilateral covenant in which God simply declares what He will do. God is the initiator and guarantor of this covenant. He comes to man to make these promises for the good and blessing of mankind.

Noah receives the promise on behalf of all, both mankind and the animal kingdom (v.9-10). Through Noah, all of us receive and participate in this covenant. This is a very important concept in the Bible. We all recognize the power of representatives to act on our behalf. We saw this with Adam and the curse. Noah, a righteous man, acting on behalf of all that will be born from him, will receive this blessing. Sound familiar? God unfolding His divine story...

ITS STIPULATIONS

Covenants also have stipulations. These are conditions where the elements of the promise relationship. Where the content, the conditions, and the consequences of the covenant are articulated. The Noahic Covenant is primarily an unconditional covenant. God simply promises what He will or will not do. In this case, God promises never to destroy the all life again by a flood nor to destroy all the earth by a flood. If there had been no judgment on sin, then the covenant would have little meaning. It reminds us that our redemption is very precious to us because of God’s great wrath against our sin and the judgement that will surely take place.

ITS SIGN

As with covenants, they usually have a seal, a reminder of the once given promise. God says that He has “set His bow in the cloud”. He divinely signs this covenant with His finger in the clouds above. The word here for bow, is the same Hebrew word used for a battle bow, like a bow and arrow.

It is as if He is saying I have hung up my weapon, the battle is over. There is peace. The rainbow will hang over us as a protection against the wrath of God.

The rainbow is interesting as a theme in scripture. Ezekiel saw a rainbow over the throne of God as giving hope amid exile (Ezekiel 1:28). The rainbow is also seen around the throne of God in Revelation 4:3. The mighty angel of Revelation 10:1, probably the Lord Jesus, is described as having a rainbow about His head. In all these cases,

¹ Gentry, Peter J., Wellum, Stephen J. “God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants.” Loc. 1118

the rainbow reminds us that God has promised to judge, but not to annihilate. He will deliver His people out of wrath to come. also, he will us home, out of the old and into the new.

Through the covenants, we hear God's commitment to deliver His people, to bless them and to bring them into relationship with Himself. They, we, are to respond with obeying faith and deep delight. After God has spoken, we look into life after the Flood. Let's pick up in verse 18.

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY

(v.18-28)

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. ²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." ²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant." ²⁸ After the flood Noah lived 350 years. ²⁹ All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

NOAH'S PROGENY

(v.18-19)

Scholars have wrestled with this section of text for years. This morning, I will not be providing any new or deep dive into this text. My aim is only to point out some more obvious conclusions.

After chaos is brought into order, we now move into the details of the story of redemption. Moses naturally starts with story of history flowing from Noah and his sons. The aim here is to show how the nations developed (v.18-19). Noah's three sons are the root from which all the nations came and dispersed. Immediately, Canaan is highlighted for Israel so that they will be careful to note what happens and what it means. The focus of the aim is to locate the line of Israel and to show why the Canaanites were Israel's mortal enemies.

NOAH'S PROBLEM

(v.20-24)

As life begins in the new creation, Noah begins to be a man of the soil, to farm. But more than that, he becomes a man of the earth. He plants a vineyard. It does not take us long for us to see man has not changed. Noah moves from the heights of promise and hope to the depths of depravity in normal, ordinary life.

But this is how sin works. What God makes for good, man uses for evil. Noah drinks too much and lies naked in his tent. Drunkenness and sexual looseness are hallmarks of pagans. This is what sin will do to you when you do not rule over it.

While we might be surprised at the open exposure of Noah's failure, we are graphically reminded that sin is pervasive and it is powerful, even in the new order, the new creation.

Moses is making his point clear. Israel, do you know why Canaan is an issue? It's because of Ham. Ham disrespected his father by seeing his father's nakedness. To the ancients, even seeing one's father naked was a breach of family ethic. The sanctity of the family was destroyed, and the strength of the father was made a mockery. Whether Ham stumbled in accidentally or intentionally he did not handle it appropriately. He goes out as if he had triumphed over his father.

If there is any question of this conclusion, look at the response from Shem and Japheth. They take great pains to avoid violating God's law, to honor their father. There has been much discussion among scholars concerning verse 24. But let's not read anymore into this text than what's here. The phrase "saw his nakedness" here is different from the phrase "expose his nakedness" used in the Mosaic Law as a euphemism for sex. Further, if Moses wants to show how degraded the Canaanites were from the beginning, why not simply be plain about it? The problem here is our own distorted sense of what is wicked sin and what is OK sin.

NOAH'S PROPHECY

(v.25-27)

And in that moment, Noah speaks a prophecy. Immediately following a Covenant with God and a moral failure by Noah and his son, we have a powerful introduction to the bless and curse motif in the Old Covenant. When one sins, there is a curse. When one obeys, there is blessing. The juxtaposition, the immediacy of these two things must grab our attention. Amid fallenness and failure, God's covenant blessing and cursing sets the trajectory for the history of peoples.

THE CURSE ON CANAAN

The curse is pronounced on Canaan. This is Moses' purpose in writing Genesis. In other words, what Moses records here is what Noah said.

But it is recorded so that Israel might understand who the Canaanites are. If Israel is going to go into the land and toss out the wicked Canaanites, here is part of the rationale. Also, the curse and blessing here shows how the character of an individual can become the character of a people. Finally, the curse on Canaan, Ham's youngest son reflects the sin of Ham, Noah's youngest son.

Canaan is cursed with servitude. He will not only be just a servant, but the servant of servants. So, when Israel comes to the promised land, they are entering what God has given them. Also, they are carrying out God's plan and purpose for the Canaanites as well.

God warned Israel about the depravity of the Canaanites in Leviticus 18:2-6. He used similar language that is much like that of the sin of Ham. After a long list of lewd and depraved sins in verses 7-23, God says this is exactly what the Canaanites were doing. Ross points out that the Canaanites were enslaved to all kinds of sexual sins. The language used here was intended to invoke Ham's sin. Thus, as Moses in giving the Torah, is creating internal connections in the text that helped the people to abhor the sins they were to avoid.

THE BLESSING ON SHEM AND JAPHETH

Look carefully at the blessing in verse 26. It says, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem." In this song or Psalm, praise is given to God for the blessing He bestows. But even more startling than that, God is blessed in the blessing of Shem. God so connects His own happiness and joy with His purposes and plans for Shem that He is blessed by Shem.

The blessing on Japheth is that of enlargement and expansion. Japheth will have many descendants, much territory and great achievement. And Canaan will be his servant as well.

One final note, God uses His personal name, “Lord” with Shem and His transcendent name with Japheth. Yet those who dwell in the common tabernacle of Shem will know the God as Lord. Through these we are taken to the Lord Jesus who is the true Shem, the true Israelite. All blessed gentiles will dwell in family relationship with the Lord, all who are in Christ, in His Tabernacle.

Reflect and Respond

Let’s think together on some very important lessons that the people of God are to learn from this.

REDEMPTIVE HISTORY SELECTS EVENTS TO SERVE THEMATIC PURPOSES.

I come back to this again. The narrative here selects and develops the stories in order to make a redemptive historical point. We are not just focusing on the folly of Noah, the failure of Ham and the humble wisdom of Shem and Japheth. We are seeing the events through which God exposed the character of the three boys and set the course of nations in motion.

WE HAVE FEW CATEGORIES TODAY THAT HELP US SEE HOW TERRIBLE HAM’S SIN WAS.

What’s the big deal? Most of you have struggled a bit with this to try to imagine what Ham did that is so bad. The Bible however treats what Ham did as very sinful. So, we do not have to try to say that more is going on here so that we make it fit our categories. We need to adjust our understanding of immodesty and parental dishonor so that we are gripped by the sinfulness of these sins.

SMALL SINS MAY HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES.

We also struggle with the proportion here. How can such small actions have such enormous consequences? How can the future shape of nations and peoples arise from 2 simple acts, one of disobedience and one of obedience? God’s economy and way of doing things is rooted in this principle. The actions of Adam take down the whole human race. The disobedience of Ham affects all his progeny. The redemptive work of one man, the Lord Jesus Christ, accomplishes salvation for His people.

THE BIBLE HAS A HIGH REGARD FOR SOBRIETY, MODESTY AND PARENTAL HONOR.

This message needs to come through loud and clear. Drunkenness, immodesty, indecent dress and lifestyles, dishonoring parents all are symptoms of paganism. Take note, all of you, but listen to me young people. God prizes the sobriety, modesty and careful, obedient wisdom shown by Shem and Japheth. God abhors the drunkenness and immodesty of Noah and the parental dishonor shown by Ham, *even as an adult*. You need to decide whose values and whose approval you seek. You need to consider your ways. May God give you a heart to hate evil and love good. May God give you grace to be controlled by the Spirit, modest and discreet in your attitudes and attire while honoring your parents for the glory of God.

May God make us serious about sin in our own lives. May we guard against the kind of attitudes and actions that brought such disgrace on Noah and sin by Ham with consequences for all. In all this, come to Jesus. Come to Him for cleansing, renewal and grace to be ever pleasing to Him.