

The Covenant with Noah
Genesis 4:1-9:17
Prepared for WellSpring Church
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Big Idea: Faithfulness and Grace in Judgment. The fatherly concern of God for his creation is seen in all of his dealings with it. (And his glory of Course)

1. Introduction

- a. engage “The story of Noah gets no respect” Like Rodney Dangerfield
 - i. A Story for children
 - ii. A Story to prove or disprove according to one’s presuppositions
 - iii. A story to explain the rainbow
 - iv. Or is there something deeper here?
 - v. “The question to ask when we read a biblical narrative is not merely What Happened? but, what was God doing? Why is this episode part of the grand biblical narrative? How does this small story contribute to the larger story of God’s redemptive intention in the world?” (Michael Williams, Far as the Curse is Found, p. 84)
- b. review
 - i. Covenant is
 1. “a relationship between persons begun by the sovereign determination of the greater party, in which the greater commits himself to the lesser in the context of mutual loyalty, and in which mutual obligations serve as illustrations of loyalty.” (Michael Williams, “Far as the Curse is Found”)
 2. Robert Rollock (1597) “the covenant of God is a promise under some certain condition.”
 3. Michael Horton: “a covenant is a relationship of ‘oaths and bonds’ and involves mutual, though not necessarily equal, commitments.”
 - ii. First audience of Genesis
 1. To Introduce the recently redeemed Israelites to the God who redeems
 2. To lay a foundation for the giving of the law that will be the basis for the Sinai covenant
 - iii. The Importance of Covenant in the Bible
 1. Shows the Holiness and perfection of God in the demands
 2. Defines What Love to God looks like
 3. Shows the sovereignty and the Grace of God

4. Gives human beings a rationale for understanding how we have dignity, meaning and purpose in the world.
- c. preview
 - i. How does the rainbow connect with the other covenants between God and man?
 - ii. Every Culture and people have a flood story—here Moses interprets the flood story properly for the Israelites and for us.
 - iii. Trial by water—Red Sea and Flood—Saved by Grace (Can I point to baptism here as well?)
 - d. Big Idea:
2. Historical Background
 - a. Cain and Abel born
 - i. Cain “I have got a man from the Lord” Wow he looks like Adam...
 - ii. Two worshippers, one “of faith and one without”
 - iii. One murder, note how God still exercises grace to Cain
 - iv. The beginning of “two humanities” those who came to God on His terms and those who followed their own ways and terms...
 - b. The seed of Cain 4:17-24—this list culminates with the arrogant boast of Lamech
 - c. The seed of Seth 4:25-26 people began to Call upon the name of the Lord (by the name of the Lord--FAS) This is the line that will eventually produce the one who will fulfill the promise of Gen. 3:15 is established.
 - d. Sons of God and sons of men
 - i. angels? Not likely
 - ii. Men from the godly line began to marry women of the ungodly line and the intermingling diluted the godliness... as a mixed marriage always does. Look at the results. Gen 6:5 “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This sad fact is repeated oin Gen/ 6:11 “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and filled with violence.”
 - e. Into Noah Introduced—this is the beginning of a new section “These are the generations” 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:19 (11x in Genesis)
 - i. The first thing we see is that Noah is a recipient of God’s Grace—favor = grace. This is important because we need to see that it is not Noah’s goodness or righteousness that moves God, but God’s grace.
 - ii. Secondly we see that he was a good man, righteous, and had a relationship with God.
 - iii. Thirdly he is a father of Sons—God always deals with people in community
 - iv. Fourthly he is given and accepts a commission from God.

- v. Fifthly his life and work are seen in the terms of faith (Hebrews 11:7) and as a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5).
 - f. Notice what we do not see here
 - i. where Cain got his wife
 - ii. the development of cultures
 - iii. the specifics of the history of man
 - iv. the spread of the population
 - v. dinosaurs etc.
 - g. What we do see is God's concern for the outworking of his redemptive purposes.
- 3. The Flood
 - a. The Flood is a judgment against sin. The first thing we hear God saying about the world after the death of Abel is a description of sin and the necessity of judgment.
 - b. Sin always grows (Note the intensity of Lamech compared to Cain)
 - i. Homosexuality
 - 1. existence
 - 2. acceptance
 - 3. celebration
 - ii. Lack of Sanctity for Human life
 - 1. man is a machine (denial of God and creation)
 - 2. death at any point
 - c. Sin always affects others and other things—all the earth was corrupt
 - i. We like to think that sin is a private matter, only me and my sin.
 - 1. Sin continues to succeeding generations
 - 2. A Mother's lack of respect and submission for her husband
 - 3. a father's lack of holiness and moral purity.
 - 4. lying, thieving, greed, anxiety, gossip, etc.
 - ii. "Sin is a matter of the heart, but from the heart all of life is affected—Human, animal and the rest of creation"
 - iii. Man is meant to be a blessing, a care-taker and governor and protector, to live as a reflection of all that God is. Instead he has become a curse.
 - d. Sin begets judgment—Always. You and I will each one pay for our rebellion, disobedience, refusal to see God as God, or to worship him as creator—or we can take the substitute of Jesus. In either case there is judgment. Some one always pays...
 - i. Tim Keller example of the broken lamp.
 - ii. Judgment is never an end in itself. Within the context of God's covenant promises and his grace, judgment is meant to preserve his honor and his glory
 - e. Grace continues to break through and reign even in the corruption of sin...
 - i. Seth after Cain

- ii. Enoch walks with God
 - iii. Lamech's faithfulness in naming Noah: Gen. 5:28-29
 - iv. Gen. 6:8 Noah found favor/grace in the eyes of the Lord
4. God's choice of Noah shows that God is a God of Grace and the flood is not only about sin and judgment.
- a. Noah found Grace
 - b. I will establish my covenant with you 6:18—I promise to take care of you out of my grace and mercy through this flood.
 - i. Aalders: "This verse clearly indicates that this covenant consisted of God's declaration that He would spare Noah and his family when He destroyed the rest of mankind. Noah and his family would become the special objects of God care and would be saved from the terrible devastation that God was about to bring on the earth. No matter how horrible the Deluge would be, Noah need not be afraid. God's covenant faithfulness was his assurance that he would survive this judgment. As for Noah's part of the covenant, he was required to believe and obey God's word, build the ark according to God's instruction, and then enter it with his family. In that way only would he be saved." (G. Ch. Aalders, Genesis, Vol. I p. 165)
 - ii. Although the natural disposition of the animals preserved with him in the ark had been by Divine power brought under restraint, he could not be ignorant that, when again left at large, their natural tempers and the instinctive ferocity of some of them would be resumed; and multiplying, in a more rapid ratio than his own family, he might probably have distrusted his ability to cope with them, and might have anticipated the likelihood of perishing before their destructive violence.... Noah had [also] witnessed the out-breakings of human depravity in its worst forms, he had...seen the failure of all the religious means employed to restrain the same. Outside of his own little family, the worship of God had entirely ceased, the preaching of His servants was completely disregarded, and profligacy and violence universally prevailed. Even his building of the ark—"by the which he condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7)—had no effect upon the wicked. The divine warnings were openly flouted, until the Flood came and swept them all away... As Noah reflected upon the past, his anticipations of the future must have been anxious and gloomy. What assurance could he have that the evil

propensities of fallen men would not again break out in works just as heinous as any performed by those who had found a watery grave? Would not men still be impatient against divine restraints, and treat the divine warnings with reckless contempt? Were such fears realized, should the corruption of the human heart once more develop in enormities and unlimited crimes, then what else could be expected than a repetition of the judgment...? And where could such a recurrence of crime and punishment end? Did there not seem but one likely answer: the Almighty, in His righteous indignation, would utterly exterminate a guilty race, which refused to be reclaimed. Such fears would not be the bogies of unwarrantable pessimism, but the natural and logical conclusions to be drawn from what had already transpired upon the theater of this earth. It is only by thus entering into the exercises of Noah's heart that we can really appreciate the pertinency of that assurance which [Yahweh] now gave him.

But as we endeavor to follow the thoughts which must have presented themselves to our patriarch's mind, we must not overlook one bright ray of comfort which doubtless did much to relieve the darkness of his trepidations. When God had declared unto Noah, "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven, and every thing that is in the earth shall die," He also added, "But with thee will I establish my covenant" (Gen. 6:17, 18). That gracious promise provided a resting place for his poor heart during the dreary days and months when he had been shut up in the ark, and must also have imparted some cheer as he now stood upon the judgment-swept and desolate earth. Yet, who that has any personal experience of the fierce assaults made by carnal reasonings (unbelief) can doubt but what Noah's faith now met with a painful conflict as it sought to withstand the influence of gloom and anxiety.

Some...may consider that we have gone beyond due bounds in what has been said above, and that we have drawn too much upon our own imagination...How had you felt...had you been in Noah's place? What had been my

thoughts, had I been circumstanced as he was? Would we have had no such fears as those we have sought to describe? Had we anticipated the unknown future without any such dark forebodings? Could we have passed through such a fearful ordeal, and have returned to an earth from which the last of our former companions had been swept away, without wondering if the next storm of divine judgment would not quite complete its awful work? Would we, only eight all told, have been quite confident that the wild beasts would leave us unmolested? Why, it is just this very mental background which enables us to appreciate the tender mercy in what God now said unto Noah. (A.W. Pink Divine Covenants)

- c. God continued to take care of Noah, during the flood and after it. Genesis 8:1 “But God remembered Noah.”
 - i. God does not forget his promises
 - ii. God does not forget his people. (Ex. 3—remember this is given to the First generation out of Egypt)
 - d. God started over with Noah
 - i. Creation command to be fruitful and fill the earth repeated 8:18; 9:1
 - ii. Sanctity of Life
 - iii. Image of God
 - iv. In the same way God starts over with Jesus—the bringing of a new creation and new people born again.
5. This is God’s pattern seen throughout Scripture...(See Dt. 4:21-31)
- a. Divine Promise
 - b. Man’s covenant disobedience
 - c. God’ judgment (Covenant curse) on sin
 - d. God’s gracious redemption
6. The Covenant
- a. Eternal—as long as earth remains Gen. 9:22
 - b. Unilateral and unconditional—Noah did nothing to deserve this promise, the earth did nothing to deserve this promise, Noah and his family were required to do nothing in order for God to keep this promise.
 - c. Shows God’s commitment to his promise and his ongoing faithfulness. He had promised to bring forth a redeemer from the seed of the woman, that is, out of the descendants of Eve. He was keeping his promise. He would and will continue to preserve the earth and the human race until that promise was fully fulfilled. He did not start over with a new race of people, he stayed with the original plan—and faithfully executed it in Christ Jesus and will continue to execute it until the restoration of all things.

- d. Also shows God's commitment to and concern for creation--
 - e. Shows both common and particular grace
 - f. However it most importantly shows that "God not man will have the last word...grace rather than wrath will prevail." (Williams p. 96)
7. The Bow, the Cross, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- a. "Battle bow" God has established a peace treaty with mankind. The word used here for rainbow is the usual word for battle bow. "In fact, other than its use in reference to the rainbow of the Noahic covenant, the word *bow* in the Old Testament always refers to a weapon of war or a dispenser of wrath." "It is quite possible, therefore, that the symbolism of the rainbow speaks of the fact that God has laid down his weapon of war and thus has put away the wrath that had led to the judgment of the flood. (The oath of malediction) According to this interpretation the rainbow is God's oath, his pledge unto death that should man break the covenant peace, God himself will suffer the curse of the covenant
 - b. Is this now what we see in the cross? Mankind has continually broken the peace that God established—and God has taken the penalty upon himself in the death of the God-Man Jesus Christ. The battle bow is no longer turned toward man, but toward God and becomes the cross. This does not mean that the wrath of God will not be poured out against the unrepentant, the one who determines to live as though God is not important...it does mean that God has prepared a way of escape. In the same way that Noah received the grace of God by believing the warning of judgment and the promise of rescue, we too today may receive the grace of God by believing the warning of judgment and the promise of Resucue.
 - c. Rev. 4—Even now God has the rainbow in heaven as a reminder as it were of God's promise to save...
 - d. There are many parallels between the rainbow and God's grace. As the rainbow is the joint-product of storm and sunshine, so grace is the unmerited favor of God appearing on the dark background of the creature's sin. As the rainbow is the effect of the sun shining on the drops of rain in a cloud, so Divine grace is manifested by God's love shining through the blood shed by our blessed Redeemer. As the rainbow is the telling out of the varied hues of the white light, so the 'manifold grace of God' (1 Pet. 4:10) is the ultimate expression of God's heart. As nature knows nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the rainbow, so heaven itself knows nothing that surpasses in loveliness the wondrous grace of God. As the rainbow is the union of heaven and earth—spanning the sky and reaching down to the ground—so grace in the one Mediator has brought together God and man. As the rainbow is a public sign of

God hung out in the heavens that all may see it, so 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men' (Titus 2:11). Finally, as the rainbow has been displayed throughout all the past forty centuries, so in the ages to come God will show forth 'the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7)." (A.W. Pink, Gleanings in Genesis)

- e. Baptism as a covenant Sign
- f. The Lord's supper as the Covenant Sign