

Sunday, November 28, 2021 | Noah

Week 4 | Genesis 9 | “The Bow of Promise.”

Announcements:

- KidzPointe worship takeover, Sunday, December 5.
 - Teen Girls Pain Night Sat., Dec 18th @ 4PM.
 - Christmas eve, Communion, Carols, and Candlelight, @ 6PM
 - Trustee meeting after service today.
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At the beginning of the month, we started a new series that revolves around the story of Noah. And while the flood story has been a staple in children's church, I must remind you that this is NOT a kid's story. It's a cautionary tale *about* adults *in* adult situations *for* adults. We learned that as man multiplied on the earth, his sinfulness did too. This then caused God's heart to turn from gladness to sadness. Yet, despite the wholesale depravity that was rampant on the face of the Earth, Noah's righteousness set him apart from those around him. And because God is merciful, he preserved the life of Noah and his family. Though Noah was surrounded by the floodwaters of death, God's grace still saves.

Two weeks ago, we were in Chapter 7. And we noticed that Noah was relegated to nothing more than a merely supportive role in his “own” story. By comparison, God shines as the primary mover in the actual flood narrative. He not only has the more significant speaking role; He is also the most active. After all, it was by His decree that Noah even built the Ark. And, as we'll see in a moment, it was God alone who shut the very doors of that ancient boat. God is Lord of the Flood. However, when his Son comes on the scene, we notice that God is the bringer of floods and calmer from storms. He need only whisper a command, and the squalling seas hold their tongue (Mk. 4:35-41). The very thing that threatens life is like the ground beneath His feet (Jhn. 6:16-25).

Last week, there was a significant shift in the story of Noah. We go from waters rising and conquering the earth to receding like a defeated enemy. God is still at the center. He is the lead actor. And he acts with mercy towards His creation. He has not forgotten Noah, his family, and all the animals on the ark. No. He has well-remembered them. His mind is full of grace for them. And so, the flood is dispatched never to overcome the earth again. This leads Noah to build an altar to the Lord once he's off the boat. He does this before he does anything else. Noah realized he and his family were the recipients of God's extravagant grace. And the only proper response to such a gift is thankfulness.

As I've said from the beginning, this is not a children's story. And that principle is best illustrated by this chapter. So, fair warning to my parents, their message may not be suitable for a younger audience. However, let me assure you, while we will not be shy when it comes to uncomfortable situations, we will be delicate with how we approach them.

READ: Genesis 9 (ESV)

¹ 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."

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."

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.

Two figures feature prominently in this chapter. Unsurprisingly, the first is God. Whereas the second is Noah. This is a little shocking, given the rest of the story. For the first time in his own story, Noah speaks. Sadly, though, what he says and why he says it doesn't bode well for the human race. However, comparing what God says to what Noah says gives us a powerful lesson about the differences between the human and the divine.

i. God's Blessing

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

"The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth...."

"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you."

"But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

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

There are a few parallels between God's words here and those in Gen. 1-2. For instance, God restates the command he first gave to Adam and Eve when he says to Noah and his family, "Be fruitful and multiply." What's more, humanity's headship in creation is reaffirmed. However, there are some significant changes:

First, unlike before, animal-kind will be given a “fear” and “dread” of mankind so that they will actively avoid human beings.

Secondly, whereas before the flood, man was a vegetarian; now, after the flood, man is permitted to eat animals for sustenance. This change is not without some rules, however. Should man kill an animal to eat, they must first drain it of blood. The blood was symbolic of life force, as if one were to lose too much of it, life would be no more. This is why most cultic religions had a practice where they consumed blood in one way or another. God would have his followers act differently. In fact, the Israelite's insistence on draining the blood from an animal before consuming it sets them apart from all of the other people groups at that time.

And, lastly, along with forbidding one to drink blood, God also outlawed murder and instituted capital punishment. Now, it sounds bizarre for me to point that out. After all, how could murder ever be legal? But, do not forget, the entire reason for God bringing the flood in the first place was because of man's sinfulness, and, particularly, the kind of sinfulness that tended toward violence (cf. Gen. 6:11-13). God wants to prevent the world from getting to the same place before the flood. So, he endowed mankind with the right to take the life of those who've murdered another life. Murder is so reprehensible to God that he will not abide it. In His eyes, every life has been stamped with His image. And anyone who intentionally kills someone else is attacking the very visage of God.

God blesses humanity once again and sets them on the right path. But we don't have to go far in the story to see that history has a way of repeating itself.

ii. Noah's Cursing

Again, just as there are parallels between God's words in Gen. 9 with those in Gen. 1-2, there are parallels between the actions of Adam with those of Noah. Even though the world has been reset, humanity is still just as broken after the flood as before it. The flood was brought to bear on the world precisely because of man's sinfulness and violence. And while it undoubtedly stemmed the symptom, the root cause of that violence still festers. After all, even though mankind's sinfulness was all but washed away, the remnants of humanity—i.e., Noah and his family—still had sinful hearts. Even a flood of global proportions did little to wash even their souls clean.

Now, it must be pointed out that this last scene leaves us with far more questions than answers.

For instance, was Noah the first to make wine, or was he simply the first to do so after the flood? If he was the first to make wine, then we shouldn't be surprised that he also became inebriated as he didn't know how the wine would affect him and, hence, we shouldn't be so hasty to judge his drunkenness. However, if he was simply reviving a practice from before the flood, he would've known wine's effects, and so we might rightly judge Noah for his lack of restraint.

And what of Ham's actions? All we're told is that Ham saw his father's nakedness and then went and told his brothers about it. Should we judge Ham for his voyeurism, or does the phrase "saw the nakedness of his father" imply something more? Does Noah's reaction suggest something else happened in the tent? We know that the words "to see" someone nakedness is sometimes used as a euphemism in a few places in Scripture (cf. Lev. 18:6-19; 20:11, 17-21; Ezek. 16:36-37). Could Ham's action be far more egregious than spying on his father and spreading Noah's humiliation to others? If there was something more than seeing and telling, this would undoubtedly explain Noah's reaction. After all, Noah is so upset by Ham's actions that he curses his own grandson, Canaan, to a life of servitude? If Ham is the offender, why does Noah curse Ham's son and not Ham himself?

Or, is Ham guilty of a lack of modesty, failing to cover his father, and shamelessly spreading his father's embarrassment to his brothers? That would be the most natural reading of the text. And, to a non-western audience, respect for one's parents was paramount. In fact, the very first commandment that was to govern man's relationship with others was "honor your father and your mother" (cf. Ex. 20:12). Hence, while to us it may seem like Ham's crimes did not fit the punishment, in reality, Noah was perfectly within the bounds of what's thought to be reasonable. What's more, Shem and Japheth go to great lengths to not even glimpse their father's indecent state. Thus, the immediate context seems to push against the metaphorical usage of the term "see." And, historically, this is the view held by the majority of interpreters.

While there is no shortage of theologians who've presented answers to these questions, the reality is that the text itself has been left purposefully ambiguous. We cannot say with 100% confidence precisely what happened. But that doesn't mean we are left with no conclusions about this scene. If anything, Noah's drunkenness at the end of the story is an excellent reminder that good men are still flawed men. Even the best of us is born with defects. None are exempt from sin's effect. In Gen. 3, sin not only breaks fellowship between the creature and the Creator, but it also strains the marriage between man and wife. In Gen. 4, sin ruptures the

friendship between brother and brother. And, here, in Gen. 9, we find, once again, that sin breaks down the relationship between father and son. The Chapter begins with a fresh start but ends on a sour note. It leaves us wanting something more than a Noah and his ark. And thankfully, we do have that something more, or, I should, someone more: Jesus Christ.

So, what's the takeaway?

READ: Genesis 9:12-13 (ESV)

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.

Interestingly, the bow was a weapon of war. Here, God takes a symbol of military prowess and transforms it into a symbol of extravagant grace. It changes the bow into a rainbow. **God turns weapons of warfare into symbols of peace.**

READ: Matthew 16:24-28 (ESV)

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Just as man once looked to a rainbow to be reminded of God's extravagant grace, man looks to the cross to be reminded of God's extravagant grace. But, unlike the flood which came, went, and will never come again; Jesus came, went, and is coming again. When he came the first time, he came as the Prince of Peace, but he will come as a conquering King when He comes again. And only those who've forfeited their lives at the foot of a wooden cross will be saved. Like the bow, the cross was once an instrument of killing, but it is now an instrument of saving. All who run to it are giving away their lives to God, true, but they are also saving their lives in the process. Thus, whether it is a bow or a cross, **God turns a weapon of warfare into a symbol of peace.**

Video Description

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TEXT: Genesis 9

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: