

GENESIS 8:13-9:17

A FRESH START

This lesson focuses on events after the flood.

Background – Creation (God pleased with his new physical world), Fall of man (curse and promise), Man becomes increasingly evil (less in God's image and more in the serpent's image) until God finally has had enough (Genesis 6:5-7), "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." Noah's character is described in Genesis 6:9: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." God chooses this man Noah to save a remnant of man and the animals. Seven members of Noah's family are saved also not because they were necessarily good, but because of their relationship to Noah. God told Noah to build an ark, load up the animals, provisions. "And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him" (Genesis 7:5). Noah obeyed God. He and family enter ark, God closes it. Then it began to rain...40 days and 40 nights until water covered the tops of the mountains. Everyone perished except those in the ark.

Genesis Chapter 7 closes with the harsh reality of God's judgment on all humanity – "He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground" (Genesis 7:23). And then Genesis Chapter 8 opens with these wonderful words – "But God remembered Noah and all... that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 8:1). After 7 and half months, the ark comes to rest upon the mountains of Ararat in modern day Turkey. Slowly the waters begin to recede.

READ Genesis 8:13

Noah and his family have been in the ark for 11 months. But as we see in the next verse it would be another month before they would be able to leave.

READ Genesis 8:14-19

It has now been just over a year that Noah and company have been in the ark. God tells Noah and his family and the animals, "Go out of the ark," and they did. The last time God spoke to Noah was one year before when He said in Genesis 7:1, "Enter the ark." There is no record that God spoke to Noah in between. Noah and his family are the only eight human beings on earth! Everyone else has been wiped out in a cataclysmic judgment. Think about how Noah feels as he exits the ark and sees before him a much different world than when he entered. Before him no doubt are the evidences of death, desolation and destruction.

READ Genesis 8:20

This is the first time in the Bible that an altar is mentioned. Notice that it is an altar to the Lord. This is an act of voluntary worship by Noah. Here he acts as his family's priest and in a real sense the priest for all humanity.

These "clean" animals were those that God had instructed to take in sevens back in Genesis 7:2-3. Moses who wrote Genesis and his original audience would have understood what clean animals were – this is covered in detail in the Mosaic Law. Noah who came along well before the Law was given would have been instructed by God which animals He considered as "clean."

Why does Noah build an altar and offer burnt offerings? After all, God did not tell him to do so. Several reasons I think. One was to express his thankfulness to God for his and his family's salvation. But also his act of worship was an expression of complete and utter devotion to the Lord. The burnt offering was made from a wide selection of the animals he had on the ark and their carcasses were completely consumed. Finally, the offering Noah made was a recognition of repentance – Noah realizes that he and his family are sinners (see end of Genesis Chapter 9 for evidence of this). He is well aware that they deserved what everyone else on the earth got – death by drowning. And so it is that we see Noah leading his family in an act of worshipful devotion to the Lord, acknowledging their sinfulness and they are undeserving recipients of God's grace.

READ Genesis 8:21

“The Lord smelled the soothing aroma...” This is a metaphor which means God is pleased by Noah’s offering. God promises to Himself never to destroy the earth by flood again.

Notice the phrase, “for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” This is in the present tense. Noah and his family are sinners too! But God spared them because of His great mercy. I am reminded of Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it.” The Flood did not purge the earth of man’s sin problem or rid the world of evil. In fact, back in Genesis 6:5 God says the same thing about the people He was about to destroy – “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 is the fallen nature of man. Nothing has changed nor has it ever changed since the Fall of Adam.

Despite Noah and his family’s present sinful condition God shows them grace.

READ Genesis 8:22

Why does God extend grace to sinners? “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30) The reason God extends grace is to lead sinners to repentance.

READ Genesis 9:1

This is the same charge God gave to Adam and Eve back in Genesis Chapter 1. It will be repeated again later in this chapter, in v 7. It is God’s mandate to procreate.

READ Genesis 9:2-3

Man is to be the ruler over God's created order, but there is a change in man's relationship with the animals. Animals will have a natural God-given fear of man. Prior to the Fall apparently humans were vegetarians (because there was no death of man or animals). After the Fall mankind became eaters of both plants and flesh (Abel was a keeper of livestock, presumably not to just keep for pets or for their skins but for meat). Perhaps Noah and his family had some questions about whether they were still permitted to eat the animals. God answers this question clearly. God encourages them to eat the animals. Notice that there is no prohibition about eating certain animals – that is given later in the Law.

READ Genesis 9:4

God's specific instruction about eating animals, not to eat its blood. This was God's protection of man as all diseases are carried through the body via the blood. Here God protects against diseases, bacteria, parasites, viruses. The meat needs to be cooked.

READ Genesis 9:5-7

Prohibition against taking the life of a human being by other men or by beasts. God places a high value on human life. God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). There is something special about man. He is a unique creation. Being made in God's image means many things – that man is transcendent, lives forever, is both a physical as well as spiritual being, has self-consciousness, can reason, can think abstractly, is able to appreciate beauty in a variety of forms, exhibit emotions, has moral consciousness, has deep interpersonal relationships including one with his Creator.

In v 6 God institutes the practice of capital punishment for murder – "will require the life of a man," "his blood will be shed." This does not apply to accidental killing, self-defense or wartime as will become clear later in the Mosaic Law. The psalmist refers to God as "He who requires blood" in Psalm 9:12.

READ Genesis 9:8-17

God makes a unilateral (it is just Him), unconditional covenant with Noah and with all living creatures. Seven times in this passage the word "covenant" is repeated. God initiates the covenant. It is His personal promise. It will last until God destroys the earth by fire at the end of time when He will create a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:3-10). This is good news for Noah and his family as their one time experience with rainfall was traumatic. God promise He will never do that again.

John MacArthur puts it quite well this way: "The whole Flood story is a revelation of God's holy wrath. God is a God of vengeance, a God of judgment, a God of wrath. But the rainbow is a sign that God is also a God of mercy and a God of grace and a God of patience and a God of peace. There will be a final wrath to come in which the universe will be destroyed by fire and all sinners will perish, between the Flood and that final time is the period of grace and the bow of God, the bow of a warrior hangs in all its beauty over the earth against the clouds of judgment as the beauty of grace touching heaven at its arc and touching earth at its ends, to tell all humanity that God is gracious to sinners."

So, what is the application for all of this?

God keeps His word, His promises. He WILL do what He says He will do. By the same token, He will NOT do what He says He will not do.

God's faithfulness over His created order – man, animals, sun, moon, seasons.

God highly values human life.

God takes pleasure in the sincere worship of our hearts with right attitudes.

God wants us to remember who He is and what He has done and to honor Him.