

Noah (Part 4 of 5)

“Covenants and Rainbows!”

*For those who are with us for the first time today, we have been studying the book of Genesis. Each week we take a section or sections of the book and see if it has anything to say to us, as 21<sup>st</sup> century people.*

Today is very much in the present. What I mean by that, is that in today's study we will both look back at earlier Genesis to find our mark and look forward to two of the most significant events in the life of the Jewish people. The first future event takes place on Mt Sinai. The second future event is the Resurrection of Y'shua. All four of these landings show us the nature of man and the nature of God, and God's great longing to bless the Jewish people or to bless the human family. This study today then could be titled "Finding yourself in the moment."

Last week we did a thematic study, but usually we will do an expositional study. Read text. [for those online it is at the end of today's sermon]

**First the Covenantal Blessing:**

The story today really began in verse 20 of chapter 8. There we see Noah building an altar after his successful cruise and landing on Mt Ararat. God was well pleased with

the offering and as a result said this in Verse one: "And God blessed Noah and his sons"

The blessing formula is significant. It follows the reinstatement of seasons, such as we saw in Genesis 1. After the turbulence of Creation and the establishment of the day/night cycle, God blessed man and woman and told them to fill the earth, to be fruitful and multiply. That echo is heard in our ears again today.

"and his sons" Why are they only Noah's sons, and not those of Noah and his wife? All the evidence in Scripture about lineage is patrilinear, from the earliest times, and this is crucial to understand the protoevangelion of Genesis 3.15. The startling proposal of a child being born from a woman, not a man and woman, is that children were seen from earliest days as being from their father.

"be fruitful"

God here again does not command the children to refill the earth, only 'says' to them. In this he repeats the earlier message given to Adam and Eve. This understanding has led some to say that the Genesis 1 phraseology was a 'refill' message, in other words, after the destruction of the planet's people and animals, it's time to 'refill' the earth, not to fill it. But I think they grasp at straws.

This theme of repopulation from a few is one of the continual encouragements of Scripture. Adam and Eve had it; Noah is assigned to do so; Abraham later and the Disciples, and even us. We could look at the world, vast and empty and get depressed.

We could say the task is too daunting, but God gives us a saying, a word, and informs our thinking that His blessing is in the population that follows us, not in our current situation. So we should take comfort and strength from this phrase.

In the account of Noah's altar and covenant, the author continues his close associations with chapter. 1. As a result of this altar and offering, the whole of the state of humankind before the Flood is reestablished. The human race is still fallen (9:21), but through an offering on the altar they may yet find God's blessing. It is significant that just as in Gen. 1, the focus of Moses' interest in "man" after the Flood is his creation in God's image (9:6).

We will see this same situation of Covenant Blessing at Mt Sinai, won't we? Exodus 19-34 (not all of it) teaches us of this event, the most significant event in Jewish history according to most Jewish people today. There a 'new people' recently brought out of slavery, now needs to find its bearings and God's favor. We will get to that later in our studies, but for now, the imagery should be clear in the Covenant at Sinai with its related altar in the Tabernacle.

When I said at the outset that there are two future events ahead of the Noah study today that are the most significant, I mentioned the Resurrection. Not everyone believes this is a Jewish event, but it is. It's the coming back to life from the dead of the most Jewish man who ever lived. Y'shua the Messiah rose again. Some Roman Gentiles had killed him and three days later He returned to life, to eat and drink with his mates, to teach, to walk and talk with them. The Exodus

story tells us about a people who were newly freed from slavery finding their footing. So the Resurrection tells us about a fallen people finding new life in relation to Y'shua, being given power in the New Covenant, and God's very blessing. Hear these words from the Master, "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28.18, 20) Favor is bestowed, not earned, in all four of these great events, from Creation through Noah, Moses and Jesus.

### **Second we have conditional behavior**

With the liberation of Noah and the kids from the boat comes a new freedom in diet. They can now eat anything that swims or gobbles, clucks, moos, etc. Or so it seems. But with every deliverance, there comes a boundary. No river is totally free; it stays within its banks, else it is not a river anymore. To maintain your identity you must stay within limits. This is the nature of being. In other words, to be your true self, you must be only yourself, and not be another. You must stay within your God-given limitations. So God tells Noah in verse 3 "every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you." This is new! The whole meat section of the grocery store now is available to him. But then he puts in what we could title "Conditional Behavior." This limiting of the new freedom is freedom indeed. God tells him to stay away from the blood of flesh, that is, raw meats and undrained animals. This will impact Noah's family in timing. Speed is thwarted,

isn't it, in both the cooking and the preparation of the meals that follow. If mankind had never eaten animals before, then now as we begin to do so, we need advise from a Consumer Affairs committee telling us how to prepare and eat our animals. Thus the clock is slowed and man cannot act on impulse in killing and dining. He must take his time in both.

Verse six calls us back to Creation doesn't it? It's all about being in God's image and likeness that helps us understand our roles in life today. You are made in God's image, therefore you should treat others in a certain way, AND NOT IN ANOTHER WAY.

Last week I went to the post office, and there saw an Italian woman behind the counter who is always very chipper and happy. She was, however, very down and depressed this particular day. And then in moments a Korean man, another postal worker entered and she was very hostile to him. This also was odd. Then I remembered that the Italian soccer team had lost the day before to the Korean team, and it all made sense. In a way, that is. Her depression was based on the loss; her anger based on the agency of that loss.

Listen, what is in the teabag is evident only when placed in hot water. And here this usually jovial woman told me what was deep in her heart by her anger at a colleague for nothing either of them had done. Only through the vicarious realities of a sporting event thousands of kilometres away, involving only about 15

men per side, and having nothing to do with her work or relationships. Ah, but it did!

What I'm saying, through the use of the World Cup motif, is that what's in the heart comes out the eyes, the mouth, out of your very being. "Guard your heart for from it flows the issues of life," says the Proverbs. But we who know Messiah need to live a different way. All people, even those from the country who beats your beloved team, are made in God's image. And they deserve to be treated differently.

Conditions are common with God's blessings. In Creation we saw a limit applied after the utter freedom to eat anything in the Garden of Eden. God wanted mankind to enjoy the pleasures of bounty, but set a limit, one tree that was off-limits. The story decayed with the rest of humanity when we went outside the bounds and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In Moses' Covenant teaching at Sinai, there are great limits put on behavior. We are told about murder and adultery, about Sabbath days and parents, about coveting and lying. Limits are much greater at Sinai than in Noah's day, for sure.

So it is in the time of Y'shua. He institutes His covenant from the last days of his life. On his final Passover with his followers, Y'shua initiates the New Covenant (Luke 22. 7ff) and extends God's grace and blessing upon them. The New Covenant is a covenant of three things, remember? {Jeremiah 31.31ff) God

would 1) forgive our sins, 2) would write Torah on our hearts and 3) give us relationship with Himself, that is, we would "know Him" personally. Y'shua says that took place at the Seder with the broken bread and poured out wine. He says that it will take place in reality on the Cross at Calvary just a few hours later, then after the Resurrection, Y'shua reaffirms it as having taken place. And as before, now we also see a conditional situation applied to our behavior. If we want to follow Him and we could say, live in His blessing, we must live a certain way. Not in terms of Laws, but in terms of the New Covenant. In other words, in relationship with God and in awareness of, or knowing Him, we act certain ways. In that Great Commission Y'shua said, "Go into all the world... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold I am with you..." Conditional behavior? I should say so! Whatever He taught, and not anything else. Religion according to Jesus is to do what He requires, to live in relationship with Himself and to be assured of God's covenant blessing.

### **Creation's Bow**

Thirdly, today we see the rainbow. It is a sign of God's covenant. And it is the first 'sign' mentioned as such in the Bible. [Hebrew is קוֹחַ.] Not only is it a reminder to me each time I see one, and lately I have seen many, but also a reminder to God. Think of it like the wedding ring you wear or these tsitsit we men wear here, as reminders to us of what we intend. It's a promise, reflective literally of Creation, that in this new Creation there would never again be a

destruction by waters of the planet. This is comforting to me when the Big Wet comes here to Sydney. The people in Wollongong often are worried as the Illawarra Escarpment rises so near them and the rains come from the Southerlys and their little valley is watered from many directions. But God has promised that He will never again flood the globe. That does NOT mean he won't flood local areas, but that the method of destroying the planet's inhabitants will never again be global waters. Their fears might have included the possibility of God's destruction of the earth again, and God is allaying those fears. Note the phrase in verse 8, "with him." Noah's sons should have been out and about, or with their wives fulfilling verse 1, but at verse 8, they were still with Noah. God is releasing them from fears here, I think. (Isaiah 54.9)

The rainbow is an arc that touches both earth and heaven and in the midst of great darkness in a brewing storm, the rainbow shouts loudly of God's eternal commitments.

When Moses gives the Covenant at Sinai, the sign was the Sabbath. When Y'shua makes his covenant with the disciples and by extension with us, the sign is the Resurrection itself. It's God's guarantee that He is involved, and that He will remember things on His end, and that He will be faithful to His promises and demands. If He asks things of you, you should know how much He is asking of Himself! And the sign is God's promise to you that He will not forget His side of the bilateral agreements.



We will end there, and not touch the ending of the passage today, but rather pick up with it next week. We will cover from end of 9 through to end of chapter 11 next week. I know it sounds a bit long, but really it's one section of Bible to be taken as a whole. We'll learn about Noah's shame and the power of the tongue, about the conditions of earth's population before the call of Abraham. So 'stay tuned.'

Brothers and sisters, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His covenant. His teaching is great, but it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God and give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into communion with Him, then why not pray this prayer and ask God to forgive you of your sins, whatever they might be, and come home to pleasure with God?

Lord forgive me in the name of the Messiah, the Serpent Bruiser, Y'shua himself. Forgive me for all my sins, and make me clean again. Give me eternal life in the name of Y'shua and make me born again. I trust you.