

Biblical Theology Equip Class- The Noahic Covenant

In preparation for today's class, I hope that many of you were able to reacquaint yourself with Genesis chapters 4-11, and especially chapters 6-9. As we continue our study of biblical theology this morning, we will essentially begin right where we left off last week, focusing on the events that take place after Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden because of their rebellion and sin. The lion's share of our time will be spent examining God's dealings with righteous Noah, focusing especially on the covenant God establishes both with Noah and *all of creation*, a covenant commonly known as the Noahic covenant.

As we begin, *I must say that all of Genesis is captivating*, and today's material is no exception. The early chapters of Genesis comprise a fascinating account of early human history. Many of its details tend to capture our imaginations from a very young age. Think of all the children's books dedicated to the account of Noah and the flood. This fascination eventually carries over into our adult lives, especially if we have an accurate and high view of Scripture. In a commendable way, many of us become gripped with the absolute historical and factual nature of this portion of Scripture- some of us even becoming resident experts in how ancient literature or modern science or archeology or geology corroborates and supports what we read in these early chapters of Genesis.

Others are content to simply daydream about what takes place, imagining the incredible task of building a sea-worthy vessel that could house families and supplies and wildlife in excess of one year- a feat accomplished in the ancient world mind you- a world without modern tools, machinery, and hydraulics. Some may ponder the circumstances surrounding all manner of animal life entering the ark- ***and the list can be multiplied***. Genesis presents a wide array of important issues to think about, wrestle through- and this is by design, God is drawing us into this formative and foundational revelation concerning Himself, who he is-foundational revelation concerning us, who we are.

But there can be a tendency to become nearsighted as we come to this portion of Scripture, focusing almost exclusively on that which is *uniquely* fascinating, or mysterious, without taking a step back in order to see the big picture. My intention this morning is that we would take a step back and see the larger landscape of Genesis 4-11 a bit more clearly- understanding its immediate context, understanding it in view of what has just taken place in Genesis 1-3, and finally appreciating its contribution to the overarching biblical narrative.

Bear in mind, as we attempt to do biblical theology in this class, we are structuring the material around the major biblical covenants. Without a doubt, covenant is one of the most important theological categories in Genesis and the entire Bible. Covenant is this concept that crops up at significant turning points in the Bible's plotline. As the Biblical narrative unfolds, as

biblical history advances chronologically, over time, we see *God's covenants rise to the surface at strategic moments in the course of redemptive history*. In one sense, it could be said that the major biblical covenants serve as the backbone of the storyline of Scripture. Each covenant *supports* and advances God's big-picture agenda in his work of creation and redemption. Each covenant holds out the idea of God's promise and certain fulfillment- thereby providing nothing less than *divine assurance* that God's purposes in human history will be realized and come to pass.

As you read your Bibles, when we see God make or establish a covenant, we also tend to see this concentration of important biblical themes appear as well, themes interlocking with themes, sometimes gloriously expanding, sometimes coming into sharper focus with greater clarity, sometimes both. Allow me give you some examples of these themes-the glory of God, man as the image of God, creation and new creation, God's presence (especially bound up with the ideas of tabernacle and temple), priest and priesthood, exile and exodus, the Kingdom of God, the City of God, the People of God, Law and Grace, Worship, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Wrath, Sacrifice, the Gospel, and there are many others that are extremely relevant. In the Old Testament especially, these themes regularly take on a predictive or prophetic function, as such they form *typologies and thematic trajectories* that find their destination in Christ, and the New Covenant, ultimately finding their fulfillment in what will be our experience of the Triune God in the Consummation, the New Heavens and New Earth.

In organizing the class this way, it is our aim that each of us gain a better feel for the interrelatedness of the major biblical covenants and the arch of these themes, seeing the wonderful harmony and unity of the Scripture, growing in our certain confidence that our Bibles do originate from a divine mind with an absolutely cohesive divine agenda, an agenda that centers on fully establishing God's kingdom among men and throughout the universe- *that God will be our God and we will be his people*, bringing into fulfillment all that the promise of Genesis 3:15 entails, and putting on display the glory of God, especially in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As we get into today's material context is critical. It is helpful to appreciate something of the big picture thus far.

As we consider the opening movements of Genesis 1- God's eternal power and divine nature on display *in the creation* form this glorious panorama, as God and his divine purposes take the stage, front and center.

When we consider creation, in the light of the whole counsel of God, we see that the universe is presented this cosmic temple, a place where His glorious presence is to be known and enjoyed. A place where he is served, praised, and worshiped.

In this cosmic temple is a holy of holies- a sacred garden sanctuary, a most holy place, and it's there that we see God placing an image of Himself. Something visible- designed to radiate the glory of the invisible God.

What God has done in creating man in his image and putting his image in this holy of holies far exceeds the frail and faltering efforts of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings, who would set up images of themselves in places where they sought to establish their authority. God establishes his authority and rule on earth by making His image a living image.

The glory of what God has done in creating man in this way settled on me in a fresh way after having a conversation with Greg Nichols some weeks ago. During that conversation, Pastor Nichols, with his typical fervor and clarity, made the point that God is alive, he is the living God, and man- as his image bearer- is alive, a living being.

In his Doctrine of Man from his series on Systematic Theology, he writes:

“When God created man, by the same divine act man became simultaneously both an animate (living) being and God’s image. Note the immense significance of this fact. This differentiates man from the images of mice that the Philistines made, from the likeness of the altar, from the image of Caesar engraved on coins, and from all other man-made replicas. God’s image is not inanimate. It is not made of lifeless stone, or coin, or paper. This quality of God’s image makes it special and unique. Thus the devil, by a supernatural wonder in which life is given to the image of the beast (Revelation 13:14-15), connives to counterfeit this singular property of God’s image. Always, God’s image is alive, because God is alive. This is why graven images are an abomination. Idols have not life in them. They have eyes but they don’t see; ears but they don’t hear. God is not like them. So also, his image is not like them.”

At this point, it is important to realize that the image of God was not lost after Adam and Eve fell into sin, even though it was marred. Several Scriptures make it clear that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, despite sin entering the world (Gen. 5:3; Gen. 9:6; James 3:9).

The theme of man ***in the image of God*** takes on a new and glorious significance in the New Testament. “Human beings can now be restored to the purpose for which they were made when they are “conformed to the image” of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29).”- Believers are being “slowly transformed into the image of God (2 Cor. 3:18).” “They are being changed “from glory to glory” and will fully bear the image of Christ on the day of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:49).” In

that day we will be like Christ, “no longer be stained or defiled by evil (Rom. 8:29).” (T. Schriener).

These truths have far-reaching implications for how we understand human life, how we understand its preciousness, sanctity, and potential. It has far-reaching implications for how we think about matters we will encounter in a few minutes, namely murder, snuffing out of the life that belongs to God’s image bearers. It has ramifications for how we think about God’s solemn declaration to Noah-

Genesis 9.5-6: “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.”

May God cause the weight of this reality to settle in on us with the solemn seriousness that should attend our status as his living image bearers.

As God places this living image, man in this cosmic temple as it were, man is **to serve and guard it**. The ESV translation states –“*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*” *Genesis 2.15*

It is the same language taken up in Numbers 3: 7-8 to describe the Levitical priesthood and their responsibilities.

The implication is that Adam and Eve were to be **priests** before God, a theme that can be traced throughout Scripture, flowing from its inception within the garden sanctuary.

The language taken up in the early chapters of Genesis implies that the man and woman were to be viceregents as well- extensions of God’s royal rule over creation. God grants the man and woman power and authority to *subdue* and exercise *dominion* (Genesis 1.28), reigning in a manner that reflects and demonstrates God’s lordship over all creation.

As priests and vice-regents made in the image of the living God, they were commissioned to *multiply and fill the earth*. The implication is that in doing so, the borders of God’s garden would extend outward into all the earth, as man and woman’s progeny takes up the mantle of image-bearing- other men and women forming this ever-expanding, unmistakable, visible expression of God’s benevolent and glorious reign.

But as you know- the pair rejected God’s rule. They rejected God’s authority as universal King. As priests, they failed in their duty to **guard** the garden. Rather than exercising dominion over all earthly creatures as God’s vice-regents, the man and woman succumb to the serpent-creature. They heed the words of this living embodiment of Satan, rather than obey the words

of God. The serpent gains dominion and influence over the man and the woman, ***and the order of creation is inverted.***

Bound up with all of this is human rebellion against God. And the consequences of man's sin are devastating. Devastating for Adam and Eve, devastating for the entire human race, and devastating for the creation as a whole. Intense shame, estrangement from God, fear. Spiritual death was immediate. There is alienation from each other- Eve blames the serpent, while Adam blames Eve and insinuates that God is ultimately to blame. Pain and sorrow follow. The woman will experience pain in childbirth. The man will endure thorns and thistles and painful toil, for God has pronounced a curse on the ground. The closest of human relationships, marriage, will be characterized by real measures of strain. The two are expelled, they are driven out from the garden, barred from the Tree of Life, and by implication, God's life-giving presence. The physical death of God's living image bearer was no longer a possibility. It was an inevitable reality.

What becomes of God's grand purposes in creation, His purpose to spread His glory and fame throughout the entire universe through the multiplication of living image bearers, reigning and serving God in the manner that he ordains?

Amid the fallout, there is a divine promise. A *protoevangelium*, ***the first announcement of the gospel.*** It is here that God pledges to reverse the disruption caused by sin and the serpent, doing so through ***the seed*** of the woman.

Genesis 3.15 "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Here we see a mortal wound being delivered to the head of the serpent by the seed of the woman even though the Serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's offspring. This promise is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, a fact made clear in the very last book of the Bible-Revelation chapters 12, 19, and 20.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve was not the end of the story. God didn't destroy humanity altogether; he promised ultimate victory over the Serpent through the offspring of the woman.

It is the fulfillment of the divine promise of Genesis 3.15- that stands in the background of these early chapters of Genesis.

Let's now turn our attention to Scripture. Please turn to Genesis chapter 4. Genesis chapters 4 through 6 provide the background to the flood and God's subsequent dealings with Noah. In these chapters, we see the consequences of sin beginning to wreak havoc.

Things are essentially going from bad to worse. Sin is this reality that inevitably characterizes each offspring of the man and woman, as they inherit a sinful nature from their parents. It is here that we begin to see sin multiply and spread through the earth exponentially. In Genesis 4 to 6, we do not see God's Kingdom expanding- ***rather we see the domain and influence of sin and the Serpent multiplying, growing, and enlarging its borders.***

Begin with Genesis 4.1- With the promised seed of the woman fresh in view, Genesis 4.1 tells us - *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."*

Here the woman acknowledges the Lord's role in procreation, as though she were hopeful that the promise of a "seed" that will crush the head of the serpent might find its fulfillment in Cain, her firstborn son. There is apparent expectation surrounding this child. But it is likely that her naming betrays a sort of *synergism with God*, the idea that God will do his part as I do my part, as if it is her place to assist God in making the promise of the seed a reality. Cain is literally named, "**the one I have gotten**" Essentially Eve is saying in this text, "I have done this" or "I have created a man equally with the Lord". The pride of place that Cain has in his parents' estimation is made even more apparent in the naming of Abel. His name could be translated "vanity" or "vapor" or "breath"- something insubstantial and fleeting. It is as if Abel is an afterthought. (Waltke/J. Sailhamer)

We all know how this turns out. Abel is accepted and Cain is rejected. Here we are introduced to a recurring theme that we will see throughout the text of Genesis- ***the failure of human effort to obtain a blessing that only God can give.***

In the Scripture, we often encounter God promising blessing, promising that He will act on someone's behalf, and man's response is to attempt to bring the blessing about by his own strength and ingenuity. Think about Sarah and Abraham's attempt to achieve the blessing of the *promised seed* through the handmaiden Hagar. Like Sarah and her efforts to bring about the fulfillment of God's promised "seed", Eve's words also express confidence in her ability to bring about the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3.15.

Later, after much pain and grief surrounding Cain and Abel, Genesis 4 v. 25 states- *And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."* In contrast to the earlier naming of Cain, Eve now properly credits God alone for giving her a child.

We see similar dynamics taken up and applied to God's sovereign gracious compassionate prerogatives in salvation. Romans chapter 9- v.11 *not because of works but because of him*

who calls, and v.16 “So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” God does not share his glory with another. As it pertains to the promise of the seed, and the promise of salvation and the gospel that is its fulfillment, in these there is no room for sinners to contribute with our own meager works.

In Cain, we see the effects of sin intensify- and spill over into one of the tightest family bonds as sibling rivalry goes off the rails. Cain could not endure the realization that Abel’s brother’s sacrifice pleased God, while his sacrifice did not.

As we come to this portion of the text- we can get caught up in why one offering was accepted and the other rejected. Some point out that Cain’s offering is bloodless, suggesting that “the sacrifice of blood was more pleasing to Yahweh.” The problem with this view is that the word for tribute or offering can be a bloodless sacrifice, and often refers to a cereal or grain offering. As it pertains to the Genesis text, it is hard to be dogmatic as we look at the offerings themselves. Perhaps there is a valid distinction that may be drawn by virtue of how the sacrifices are described. Cain brings “some of the fruits” with no commentary on their quality. They are not described as the first fruits or the best of his garden. Abel brings the best, *the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions*. In such case, it may be that Cain’s sin is tokenism (B. Waltke).

He looks religious, but in his heart, he is not truly dependent on God, full of faith or gratitude, seeking to love God with his heart, mind, soul, and strength. But to wrangle over the precise offense of the offering may cause us to miss other features of the text that deserve our attention. Ultimately, it is the worshiper’s heart God sees, and not the offering itself. And it is Cain’s reaction, not the nature of his offering per se, which reveals something more of his heart. This is what the text draws our attention to. The text tells us -*So Cain was very angry, and his face fell*. Anger and disappointment reveal an economy of expectation and deservedness, that somehow the Lord owed him recognition and accolades. Despite Cain’s anger- which it is safe to say is directed at the Lord himself, we see God coming to Cain. He speaks tenderly to Cain. He is concerned about him. In wisdom God corrects Cain, He warns him. Verse 6-7: *The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? **I**if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.**”*

“Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” Here sin is no longer a mere possibility, but is now a power, a power that the people of God must go to war with. But Cain is unwilling to go to war with sin, unwilling to battle against the thing that God has unmistakably put his finger on. His clear disobedience to the voice and word of God demonstrates his lack of faith, for there is no indication that he is seeking to take God at his

word. Ultimately- he murders his brother. Here we see a man determined to be first in every domain, even in the domain of religion. Much like the Pharisees, he is willing to murder in order to retain the place of honor at feasts and the best seat in the synagogue, as it were. Therefore, God's wise ordering of human affairs is once again inverted as sin exercises influence even in the arena of religious service. (Carson- For the Love of God).

It is here we see a new type of image-bearing taking place. Cain is the son of Adam to be sure, but his actions show that he bears the image of the one who came to kill, steal and destroy. So much so that 1 John 3 says- *We should not be like Cain, **who was of the evil one** and murdered his brother.*

Humanity, a few generations later, has fared no better, as we hear this refrain from Lamech- Genesis 4.23-24- *“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.”*

Lamech is brutal. He is cynical. He is arrogant. He is full of vengeance. He is the first named polygamist. By virtue of how he speaks to his wives, he is a misogynist. Although his sons are making noteworthy advancements in animal husbandry, music, and metalworking- from a moral standpoint society is regressing. And dad is leading the charge. He murders a young man for striking him. Clearly, the blow that Lamech sustained didn't incapacitate him too greatly. He still had the wherewithal to kill a man.

Lamech is either a man with bad theology- or more likely- just plain irreverent. He invokes God's words previously spoken to Cain to justify his vendetta- God, in an act of extraordinary kindness- said to Cain- *“If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold”*. So Lamech boasts, issuing a warning that- *If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.*

But if he had truly considered God's dealings with Cain, he would have perceived God's patience and mercy toward Cain. God did not snuff out Cain's life in response to his egregious murder of Abel. God did not exact vengeance in the immediate context. God put some sort of enigmatic mark on Cain, some sort of hedge of protection around him so that he might not die though forced to be a restless wanderer.

Where Lamech is reprobate, Christ is exemplary. The formulaic expression referenced by Lamech- *If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold*, signifying unrestrained violence toward anyone who crosses him- is taken up by Christ-

Matthew 18.21-22 *Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you*

seven times, but seventy-seven times. Whereas Lamech boasts of vengeance, a prerogative that belongs only to God, Christ commends forgiveness.

Moving forward, in Genesis Chapter 5 we see this extraordinary genealogy that serves at least 3 purposes.

1. It shows man's value in God's sight, as individuals are recounted by name and lifespan and offspring.
2. It shows how the line of Seth, the offspring of the woman, is connected to the person of Noah, who is later presented as a deliverer and new Father of all humanity.
3. It forms this roll call of death- a reminder that death is certain and inevitable. When we first read this list, quite frankly we are impressed by the extraordinary lifespans of each of these men. But there is an oft-repeated refrain that haunts the whole chapter "and he died". - *Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, **and he died**. Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, **and he died**. Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, **and he died**. Time and time again- "**and he died**".* So here we see that The wages of sin is death. Every word of God proves true. (Carson)

In view of these verses, the long lifespans, and the state of affairs of Noah's day, it occurred to me that sin and eternity and even sin and extraordinary longevity are not a good combination. Imagine if man, as a general rule, lived 3 score and 10 **plus another 800 years**, with some measure of vitality intact for a large portion of that time. Apart from the influence of God's Spirit- imagine how that would inflame our proclivities toward sin, the sowing of wild oats, the disregard of God. With death being centuries away, as if it will never come, the sins and follies of our youth would multiply- apart from a work of grace in us. We would become those who grow restless, we would invent and explore all manner of evil.

The Lord would limit such long lifespans, and though it was an act of judgment, it is also a mercy- as he teaches sinful man to number his days in order that he might gain a heart of wisdom. This realization brings God's wisdom in banning our access to the tree of life into crisper focus. If sinful men were to go on living forever, again, apart from an extraordinary work of grace, we would eventually become raging devils, seeking to usurp God in ways that are unimaginable.

As we move forward in Genesis, we encounter Genesis chapter 6 verses 1-4.

1When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any

they chose. 3Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." 4The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

There are about 3 or 4 plausible interpretations of this passage, each interpretation giving rise to its own peculiar questions and objections, and most everyone who has a take on these verses is generally prepared to defend their position vigorously. But no matter how we interpret the difficult portions, just about everyone can agree that evil is intensifying in an unprecedented way in these verses. You get the impression from reading the account that sex, violence, and power are now the common currency.

After God gives his assessment of the culture at large in v. 1-4, he now narrows his focus to the human heart.

Genesis 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." It is outward, in society, and inward, in the heart. It is everywhere. It is unrestrained. The text mentions "every intention," "only evil," and "continually." Sin is both extensive and intensive. This is the fallout from the fall. It is a bleak picture.

In verses 11-13 of chapter 6, two terms in particular become front and center: "corrupt" and "violence." The text mentions "corrupt" three times and violence "twice". (Wellum and Gentry).

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

The earth temple is corrupt and filled with violence. Because the image bearers are corrupt and violent. The implication is that both the cosmic temple and the image of God within the temple are now somehow defiled, completely and utterly.

The question then becomes- how would God respond?

Genesis chapter 6 verses 6-7 state- *And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

God responds. God's response is the outworking of his holiness, his righteousness, and his justice. God is not being temperamental. God is not acting irrationally. **1 Peter 3.20 tells us that God waited patiently in the days of Noah.** Therefore, His decision to judge humanity in this way was not the product of moodiness. Here God is acting in a sovereign, deliberate, and determined way, as He purposes to judge and destroy mankind, along with all creatures that make their home on dry land.

This flood was global and cataclysmic in nature- the fountains of the deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. If the flood were only local or regional, animals and people, in some measure, could migrate out of its reach. Instead, Scripture describes the flood as covering every mountain on the face of the earth. According to Scripture, all flesh, save that which was in the ark, died. (G. Nichols)

As the world was inundated with water from above and below, it seems likely the face of the earth was probably radically altered. In fact, the flood is portrayed as a type of cataclysmic de-creation. Genesis 1 depicts creation in terms of separation and distinction, but in Genesis 6 – 7 such distinctions are eradicated- In Genesis 1:6–8 God establishes a firmament to keep the heavenly waters at bay, but the opening of the ‘windows of heaven’ in Genesis 7:11 (ESV) tears this protective canopy apart. Likewise, the distinction between subterranean waters and the earth established in Genesis 1:9 is obliterated as the ‘fountains of the deep’ burst forth in Genesis 7:11. In the flood, the creative process of forming the earth out of water and by water- 2 Peter 3.5, bringing order out of a watery chaos, is reversed. The earth reverts back to that chaotic watery mass. Therefore, as one theologian concludes, *The flood is only the final stage in a process of cosmic disintegration that began in Eden.*’ (G. Nichols)

Leaned heavily on Schreiner in the remaining material.

*Since the flood is portrayed as a de-creation, then we should not be surprised if the rescinding of the flood waters looks something like a re-creation. A Creation 2.0- And in fact that is what we see- **The Flood Account as a New Creation and Noah as a New Adam.***

Let’s talk a little about Noah- Although God’s judgment on the world was comprehensive, there was one man who stood out in God’s sight. *“Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8), for he was “righteous,” “blameless,” and “walked with God” (v. 9). (Schreiner).*

God determined to spare Noah and his family. God intervened in his life, warning Noah and instructing Noah to build an ark as a means of preservation and salvation when the flood inevitably comes. From the text, a prominent feature of Noah’s life is that he was righteous, blameless, and walked with God. Scripture later tells us that faith was the distinguishing mark

of Noah's walk with God (Heb. 11:7). Therefore, it is not as if Noah merited/earned God's saving favor; "he pleased God because of his faith" (Schreiner), which is a gift from God, and his righteous behavior and blameless walk were the overflow of his trust and faith in God. And Noah shows his faith by taking God at his word.

There are several parallels between God's new start with Noah and God's initial creation of Adam and Eve. These parallels present the flood narrative as a New Creation, Noah represents a New Adam or the father of new humanity. Let's consider those parallels.

Summation: (Schreiner)

*-The earth is made inhabitable by the separation of the land from the water (Gen. 8:1–3; cf. Gen. 1:9–10). In the early verses of Genesis, God carries out his work of creation, by shaping a watery global mass- as I have already mentioned. The receding flood waters remind us of God's original work- the receding waters represent a new creation of sorts, with echoes of separation and distinction that we saw in the opening movements of Genesis. In fact, Genesis 8:1 mentions that God caused a wind (Heb. *rûah*) to pass over the waters of the flood covering the entire earth, echoing the original creation account, where the Spirit (Heb. *rûah*) of God hovers over the waters of the surface of the deep.*

-Living creatures are brought out to repopulate the earth (Gen. 8:17–19; cf. Gen. 1:20–22, 24–25).

*-Days and seasons are re-established (Gen. 8:22; cf. Gen. 1:14–18). Remember that in Genesis 1 "God created the sun and the moon to distinguish the day from the night and to establish the seasons of the year (Gen. 1:14–18). After the cataclysmic flood, this ebb and flow becomes patently evident once again, with "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, **day and night**" (Gen. 8:22).*

-Humans are blessed by God (Gen. 9:1; cf. Gen. 1:28a). Genesis 1:28- "Adam and Eve were blessed by God" and commissioned "to be fruitful and multiply." This same commission was given to Noah as well as recorded in Genesis 9:v. 1, v. 7.

-Humans are commanded to 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' once again (Gen. 9:1b, 7; cf. Gen. 1:28b), and

Humans' dominion over the animal kingdom is reissued/reinstated (Gen. 9:2; cf. Gen. 1:28c). "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."

God shows himself to be the one who provides humanity with sustenance (Gen. 9:3; cf. Gen. 1:29–30). In Gen. 1:29 God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.” This provision was reiterated to Noah and his family and then expanded to include the consumption of meat (Gen. 9:3)- “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.”

Finally, Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. Genesis 9.6 makes it clear that the image remains despite the devastating consequences of sin. Humans are still sacred and human life has undeniable sanctity (Gen. 9:6).

Therefore, when we step back and take in the big picture presented in Genesis 1 and Genesis 9, as the dry land emerges, we essentially see a new creation and Noah represents this new Adam figure. The parallels are undeniable.

Now- there is an important qualification at this point. Adam was created sinless. Noah and his progeny were not somehow rendered sinless. *The narrative, the vineyard, Noah’s drunkenness, Ham’s indiscretion- make it abundantly clear. The earth has not been utterly delivered from the effects of fall. The creation still groans. Mankind still labors under the burden of sin- the same sin that brought the judgment of God in the first place.*

This remaining sin is not lost on the Lord. This is something that God’s Covenant with Noah makes explicit provision for.

Let’s talk about The Nature of the Covenant with Noah (leaning heavily on Schreiner)-

If I could sum up the Noahic covenant- I would describe it as the *universal/common grace* covenant made with *the entirety of creation*, (humanity, the animal world, all of creation)- *motivated primarily by God’s redemptive purposes*. It is a *universal covenant, made with all of creation (hence the evident common grace dynamic) motivated primarily by God’s redemptive purposes in Christ.*

Let’s look at the definitive verses that encapsulate the essence of the covenant and see if we can make sense of what is going on.

Genesis 8.21-22

“And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

And Genesis 9.8-12

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 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. 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.”

What do we see?

We see God’s promise to sustain human life on the earth until the very end. The ground will never again be inundated with a cataclysmic flood (Gen. 8:21). Human life will not be utterly cut off until the glorious consummation of all things. And this promise is given, as it were, to all living creatures, not only human beings (Gen. 9:9–10). This is clearly seen by the central promise of the covenant in chapter 9 v.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” (v. 11).“*

At first glance, we might see this covenant simply as this promise not to flood the earth globally and cataclysmically. And the covenant does promise this.

*But something more is implied- In promising no future flood, God was pledging that human beings will be preserved, and the world will endure until all of God’s promises are fulfilled. **The covenant with Noah is a creation covenant in that it guarantees the continuance of the world until the redemptive promise of Genesis 3.15 reaches its fullest intended expression.***

Sometimes we get confused on this point- It is not a promise to withhold judgment and destruction altogether. Peter speaks of another inevitable cataclysmic judgment- “the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire” when Jesus returns- (2 Pet. 3:5–7).

But until Jesus returns- the Noahic covenant assures us that the world will continue with a predictable order and stability. Will there be natural disasters? Yes. Creation will continue to groan. Nevertheless, the Noahic covenant assures us “that that despite the disruptions in the natural order, the world will go on. Life will not be snuffed out altogether until all of God redemptive purposes” within this fallen world are realized (Schreiner).

*Therefore- the covenant applies to all of God’s creation. He sustains his creation in part because it is the God-ordained theatre in which the drama of redemption unfolds. The covenant with Noah isn’t redemptive in and of itself, but it promises that the world will continue until God’s purposes and redemption are achieved. **Therefore- it has an explicit common grace feature that ultimately rests upon God’s implicit redemptive agenda.***

Why did God make this covenant with Noah and all of creation?

Before the flood God observed 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 provoked God’s judgment that was the cataclysmic flood. After the flood, as Noah offered pleasing sacrifices to God, the Lord said, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done” (Gen. 8:21).

*“The discerning reader recognizes that the words Genesis 6:5 still hold true. **The fundamental nature of human beings hadn’t changed since the flood. The intention of the heart was still defiled by evil.** Starting over again wouldn’t lead to Eden.” (Schreiner).*

Humanity remains liable, at every turn, and in every moment, to the same destructive cataclysmic judgment of God. The fundamental reality (sin) that initially provoked God’s global judgment by means of the flood still provokes him after the flood. Yes- Noah was a New Adam. And the flood signified a type of new creation. But this new start did not remedy the plight of human sin.

But God in his mercy now draws attention to his glorious and global redemptive purposes, and in order to bring those purposes to its fullest intended expression, God pledges to withhold cataclysmic judgment until all is accomplished.

“When we look at the world as it is, we often wonder if it would help to start all over again. The story of Noah tells us that the human race had started again, but God was under no illusions as to what would happen.” -Schriener

“The covenant to preserve the world, then, wasn’t grounded on human godliness and goodness. Instead, the continuity of the world is due to the mercy of God. He extends what is often called “common grace” in allowing human society to develop rather than destroying it.” (Schreiner).

“The covenant with Noah is instructive because it shows that being given a fresh start and a clean slate is not a sufficient remedy for the human plight. The unmerited favor and kindness of God in preserving his world in the covenant with Noah creates a firm stage of history where God can work out his plan for rescuing his fallen world. It also points ahead to the coming deliverance in Jesus Christ.” (Gentry and Wellum).

Why is this important from a biblical theological standpoint? How does this covenant fit into the entire narrative of the Bible?

Noah was saved from the flood to ensure the survival and preservation, not only of the entire human race but implicitly of ***the line of the promised seed***, through which the consequences of the fall would ultimately be reversed. That was part of the point of the genealogy in chapter 5 connecting Noah to Seth, the seed of Adam and Eve. Ultimately if God did not spare humanity through Noah, if there is no Noah, there is no seed of the woman. And if there is no seed of the woman, then God does not keep his promises. However, God is utterly trustworthy, he cannot lie. He has and will keep his promises, bringing his divine purposes to pass—namely salvation through this promised seed, going to great lengths to see this promise through to the end.

This is precisely what the Noahic Covenant and all subsequent covenants serve to guarantee and provide us assurance of.

Consider Schreiner's interpretation of the sign of the covenant:

“Many covenants have signs, and we are specifically told that a sign was attached to the covenant with Noah (v. 12). God set his bow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant, to remember his covenant with human beings (vv. 12–17). Obviously, this doesn't mean that God might forget the covenant without the bow; it means that the bow is an ongoing testimony to God's faithfulness to his covenant promise. The sign constitutes God's oath and promise that the covenant will not be withdrawn. Indeed, the covenant made here is “everlasting” (v. 16) and was meant “for all future generations” (v. 12; cf. Isa. 54:9). It was a universal covenant in that it was made with Noah and with “every living creature of all flesh” (Gen. 9:15). The universal character of the covenant is particularly important and so it is repeated twice more (vv. 16–17). The covenant doesn't promise universal salvation, but it does guarantee universal preservation. The bow, as the sign of the covenant, represents a weapon of war (cf. Gen. 48:22; Josh. 24:12; 1 Sam. 2:4). If God unleashed his bow and let it fly, then all humanity would be destroyed. The sign of the covenant is that God has withdrawn his bow. He has put his weapons of war down and will not wipe out the human race again.” (Schreiner).

Moving Forward in the Genesis Narrative-A New Beginning

“Noah and his family constituted a new beginning. Noah, like Adam, was in a garden, and like Adam he sinned in the garden. He planted a vineyard, got drunk, and lay naked in his tent (Gen. 9:20–21). Ham dishonored Noah in his nakedness, and Ham's son Canaan was cursed for Ham's actions (vv. 22–25). The new beginning under Noah was much like the first beginning. In the case of Noah and his family, the sin residing in the human heart burst forth quickly. God promised to preserve the world, but the world after Noah obviously wasn't paradise. The new family (Noah's) had all the same problems as the old family (Adam's). Once again, a distinction

is drawn between those who will be cursed and those who will be blessed (vv. 25–27), and so here the promise of redemption is implied (cf. Gen. 3:15).” (Schreiner)

“As history passed, it seems that human beings had again reached a crisis point. They built the Tower of Babel to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4), a tower that reached to the heavens so that they could dispense with God and accomplish their own designs and purposes. The tower was significant in the eyes of human beings; it seemed to reach up to the heavens! But God mocked the effort of human beings, recognizing that their effort was puny. The tower was so small that God, so to speak, had to come down and take a look, for he couldn’t see it from heaven (Gen. 11:5)!” (Schreiner).

“God has promised to preserve the world and to sustain the human race, but the prospects for humanity looked dim since evil dominated human hearts. What is the answer to the wickedness that plagues humanity? God’s solution is provided in the covenant with Abraham” (Schreiner)- and Scott will address that covenant in the coming weeks.

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