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*Series: Covenant: God's Way of Relationship*



*A Teaching Sermon: "Noah: The Covenant of Preservation, Part Two"*

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God created the heavens and the earth. We have creation culminating in the creation of man. Adam fell and plunged humanity into the estate of sin and misery. After the Fall of Adam, two seeds or lines of offspring emerge: those who are of their father the devil and those who are in Christ, whose Father is heavenly...a Heavenly Father. When corruption and violence come to cover the earth, God brings judgment and we have the Flood.

Corruption infiltrates to the point that **"every intent of the thoughts of his [mankind's] heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)"** God is grieved, and judgment is coming. God plans to wipe out humanity all together, and not only humanity, but animals, creeping things and birds of the air; God was sorry that He had made them. **But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.** (Genesis 6:6-8) A remnant of human and animal life, and more, will be spared.

Genesis 6:9 begins the book of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. The earth was corrupt and filled with violence. God looked on the earth and then said to Noah, **"The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth... Make for yourself an ark ..."** (Genesis 6:13 ff). Total and absolute destruction will come on the seed of Satan; free and unmerited grace will be shed forth on a remnant, the elect Seed of the woman.

**"And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark— you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female."** Genesis 6:17, 18.

Genesis chapters seven and eight talk about the Great Flood and Noah's deliverance. Noah obeyed God and built the ark, doing just as God said to do. God closed the door to the ark. Then after the Flood, God told Noah to go out of the ark with his wife and sons and his sons' wives, bringing every living thing of all flesh that was with him.

Noah built an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings of clean animals and clean birds on the altar. This was a blood offering. Noah's offering pleased God and God responded with a unilateral covenant not to destroy creation again by flood.

**Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.'** Genesis 8:20-22.

In the Covenant with Noah we find both common grace and special grace. There is significance both for the earth and for redemption. Two lines among humanity begin their development; one line belonging to Satan, and one line belonging to the Seed of the woman. The covenant with Noah manifests God's position toward both. "Total and absolute destruction shall be heaped on the seed of Satan, while free and unmerited grace shall be lavished on the Seed of the woman." (Robertson, *Christ and the Covenants*, page 109)

Four passages in the Genesis account speak to the nature of the covenant established with Noah: Genesis 6:17-22; Genesis 8:20-22; Genesis 9:1-7; and Genesis 9:8-17. We have already looked at Genesis 6 and Genesis 8, so we'll move on.

O. Palmer Robertson notes six distinguishing characteristics in his discussion of the Covenant of Preservation in his book, *Christ and the Covenants*. Here's a summary:

**1. A close interrelationship exists between the creative and redemptive covenants.** The bond with Noah renews provisions of creation, e.g., comparing Genesis 6:20 and 8:17 with Genesis 1:24, 25, 30. In Genesis 9:1, 7 Noah and his family are charged to "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth." Man was to rule over creation in harmony, but with man's fallen state, God's judgment on sin brought a disharmony with the consequence that the fear and terror of man was to fall on every animal, bird, and fish of creation (Genesis 9:2). Man continues as "subduer," but the bent toward evil brings a bent toward domination and exploitation instead of true dominion.

Man's tendency to think narrowly and out of selfish ambition must be overcome with the understanding that "redemption involves his total life-style as a social, cultural creature." (Robertson). Salvation brings a new world-life perspective to those that are "in the world but not of the world" (Jesus). Hosea poignantly emphasizes the unity in Hosea 2:18 cf. Genesis 6:20; 8:17; 9:9, 10) In Hosea 2, God will cut a covenant with the created universe, including the animal of the field, the birds of the heaven, and the creeping things of the ground. Hosea uses the distinctive categories of the universe found in God's covenant with Noah. God purposes to redeem a people to Himself. God sustains all of His creatures by the grace of the covenant made with Noah. God desires Israel and all redeemed persons to be in a fruitful relationship to Himself. Again and again, it is "bear fruit that remains" and "be a fruitful field."

So "we see God reestablishing His creation ordinances in the Covenant of Noah. It is part of the Covenant of Grace but the creation ordinances are still maintained...The creation ordinances are perpetual...for every culture for every time, for every people, for every nation. The creation ordinances are perpetual." (J. Ligon Duncan)

**2. God's redemptive grace is particular.** From the masses of depraved humanity, God directs His grace towards one man, Noah, and by extension, his family. Noah's favored position was not based on anything Noah earned or deserved, but on the grace of the LORD Himself. In Noah's day, **every initial formation of the thoughts of man's heart (Gen. 6:5) were only evil all the day. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.** "God's grace to Noah did not appear because of this man's righteousness, but because of the particularity of God's program of redemption." (Robertson) See Ephesians 2:1, 2, 8-10. Paul will tell us in the NT that grace reigns through righteousness. Grace can make us righteous, but righteousness on our part can't make God give us grace. There is none righteous, no not one. Romans 5:20, 21.

Derek Kidner says, "If as few as eight souls are saved, seven of these owe it to a single one, and this minority inherits the new earth." And Kidner goes on to say that the first full scale judgment demonstrates that with God, the truth of a situation prevails, regardless of majorities and minorities. God didn't look out there and take a count and say, "Well, the majority are wicked, I guess I am just going to have to forgive them." God brings the judgment upon the

majority". <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/classes-and-training/covenant-of-preservation/>

**3. God's deals with families in His covenant relationships.** In Genesis 7:1 we have: **And Yahweh said to Noah, "Go, you and all your house, into the ark; for you [singular] I have seen as righteous before Me in this generation."** Because Noah is seen as righteous before the LORD, his entire family experiences deliverance from the flood. That's not fair! Read Romans 9 and consider this comment from J. Ligon Duncan: "Only a person that comes to grips with the nature of sin and that sin inherently deserves judgment is able to cope with what the Bible says about how God handles sin." God deals with Noah as the head of his household. Into the ark they go. <sup>7</sup> **By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Hebrews 11:7.**

God His Father sent Jesus Christ to save a people unto Himself. His life is seen as "one righteous act." (Romans 5) We will see this pattern: by one man, by grace. Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin, paying the penalty for sin. Those who believe in Him will be saved from the wrath of God and receive in Him eternal life and an eternal inheritance.

**4. The covenant God makes with Noah is a Covenant of Preservation.** We see this in Genesis 8:20-22. **Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination<sup>[a]</sup> of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. <sup>22</sup> "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."**

God binds Himself to preserve the earth in its present world-order until the consummation of the covenant of redemption. The sin problem will not be cured by judgment upon judgment and curse upon curse on the earth. The earth will be preserved free of devastating judgments such as the flood for a time. God consumed the earth by means of a cataclysmic flood as a model of His final judgment of the earth, and the basis for refuting the argument of scoffers who would mock the certainty of an ultimate Day of accounting. (2 Peter 3:4-6)

Let's be clear. "Man is totally depraved, inclined towards self-destruction, and worthy of judgment. But God in grace and mercy determines to preserve the life of man, and promotes the multiplication of his descendants." (Robertson)

All created life is sacred, with the highest value being attached to the life of man. Now get this: "Because God's own image is stamped in man, the murderer must die." Let's hear it:

<sup>3</sup> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. <sup>4</sup> But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. <sup>5</sup> Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. <sup>6</sup> "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. Genesis 9:3-6 NKJV

Here God institutes in seed form the temporal power of the state as His instrument in controlling evil. It is necessary. God dealt with the murder of Cain directly, but now the power of the sword, for the first time, is placed in the hands of people. The intent is to put fear of wrongdoing and law-breaking into people, to restrain the conscious activity of wickedness, and to restore and maintain law and order. God will exact justice from either man or animal that murders. Ezekiel

33:6 and Ezekiel 34:10 use identical phrasing. God's purpose is to restrain evil inherent in humanity.

**5. The covenant with Noah stresses cosmic dimensions,** namely, the whole of creation including all of humanity and "every living creature" living under the sign of the rainbow (Genesis 9:10). All of creation benefits, as Paul points out when speaking of the final expectation of the redeemed in Romans 8:22, 23.

<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

<sup>23</sup> Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:22-23 NKJV.

The entire universe will experience ultimate deliverance from the curse. The entire creation will experience the restoration of all things. This universal character of the covenant with Noah sets the foundation for proclaiming the gospel around the world in this present age. God will faithfully maintain the orderings of His creation with longsuffering. His purpose? To make known the testimony of His goodness throughout the universe. O. Palmer Robertson notes, "Wherever man is found, the witness of God's ordering as determined by the covenant with Noah testifies to the glory of the Creator." The gospel goes out to all nations and to every creature, to all creation. (See Romans 10:18 and Palm 19:4.) God is Lord of all. God will maintain the whole of creation until the judgment of fire (2 Peter 3:3-10). Delay of judgment on the world shows longsuffering to humanity as a whole, "despite the fact that ultimately not all shall be saved." (G. John Murray)

**6. The seal of the covenant with Noah emphasizes grace.** The context of threatening judgment amidst rain clouds stands as the backdrop for the rainbow and God's grace-in-judgment. God's decrees are immutable and righteous, hence, the Flood. But the rainbow here is a word normally used for "battle-bow." According to Von Rad, the colorful rainbow indicates that God has laid aside his battle-bow after the flood. The storm retreats. The sun's glimmer gives hope; it will shine again. The battle bow laid aside tokens grace "staying the lightning-shafts of wrath." (Meredith Kline)

<sup>9</sup> And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed [descendants] after you;<sup>10</sup> And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.<sup>11</sup> And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.<sup>12</sup> And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:<sup>13</sup> I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.<sup>14</sup> And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:<sup>15</sup> And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.<sup>16</sup> And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.<sup>17</sup> And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. Genesis 9:9-17. KJV

In Revelation 4:3 the throne of the righteous Judge of heaven and earth has a rainbow round about the throne like an emerald to look upon.

**7. The covenant with Noah is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.** In anticipating the formal ratification of the covenant with Noah, God will destroy man from the face of the earth;

but Noah will find grace in the eyes of the Lord. God shows His attitude toward the Seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. Life and death are involved. Death comes to the covenant-breaker who takes the life of man. Preservation results from proper observance of the covenant stipulations. God's promise to "be with us" involves not only an outpouring of His grace on His people whom He has redeemed, but also in the outpouring of His wrath on the seed of Satan. Redemption will come in the Person of Jesus Christ, God with us, Immanuel.

Thanking God and giving Him glory,

*Mary Craig*

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**"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."  
Revelation 21:7**

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