

THE NOAHIC COVENANT – Session Two



Leader's Opening Remark

The story of Noah occurs roughly 2400 years before the time of Jesus. While Noah's Ark is often an endearing bible story that we eagerly share with our children because of the adorable pairs of animals and ultimately, the beautiful rainbow in the sky, we often place little emphasis on the mission of human bodies lost in the horrific flood. The Bible describes a lawless, sinful humanity that is far from God. The Noahic Covenant demonstrates God's extravagant mercy and secures the earth as a STAGE for the reconciliation of all things!



It is fascinating to discover that the covenants of the Old Testament, beginning with Adam in Eden and continuing to the “New Adam” in Jesus, have a pattern: God describes God’s self and what God has done, God discusses the responsibilities and requirements that God has of humanity, and God details the rewards and punishments that God will use to manage the keeping and breaking of the covenant. This proves that God is orderly and fair, rather than chaotic and unjust in terms of relating to humanity. In initiating covenants, God help’s us see patterns of God’s love for us.



THE NOAHIC COVENANT: A COVENANT OF GRACE

In the story of Noah, we see how God’s redemption began to be played out on the world’s stage. Last week, we learned about conditional and unconditional covenants. The Noahic covenant is an *unconditional covenant* or “covenant of grace.” You may recall that an unconditional covenant is an agreement between two or more parties that involves no stipulations of any kind for the fulfillment of the agreement. The essence of the covenant of grace is the same throughout the Old and New Testaments: God saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Our journey will eventually reveal how Christ accomplished what Adam failed to do in the covenant of works. Therefore, we all receive the grace of Jesus Christ.

By the time we get to today's scriptures, and in addition to what happened in Eden with Adam and Eve, we see the first murder on earth in the story of Cain and Able. This account is about a guy, Cain, who murder's his brother, Able, simply because Able's offering to God was more acceptable and pleasing to God than was Cain's offering. In his jealousy, Cain sins and murders his brother.

A recurring plot begins to develop:

- SIN
- GOD CALL'S THE SINNER(S) TO ACCOUNT
- GOD DECLARES THE PUNISHMENT
- GOD EXTENDS GRACE

Sound familiar? It is in the stories of the Bible; and, it is our story, too!

Genesis 6:1-3, MSG

6 1-2 When the human race began to increase, with more and more daughters being born, the sons of God noticed that the daughters of

men were beautiful. They looked them over and picked out wives for themselves.

3 Then God said, “I’m not going to breathe life into men and women endlessly. Eventually they’re going to die; from now on they can expect a life span of 120 years.”

- God says, “no more of this 900+ years stuff – human life is now capped at 120 years

Genesis 6:5-7, MSG

5-7 God saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil—evil, evil, evil from morning to night.

- People aren’t just violent or wicked; they take pride in it; before they opened their eyes at the dawn of each new day, people are ONLY evil – all the time
- Wickedness is all they think about, all the time.

SIN IS SEEN HERE as an internal problem of the heart: Humans are wicked, and only think about evil, all the time.

6 God was sorry that he had made the human race in the first place; it broke his heart.

- VS 6 – look at the word, “broke” (in some translations “grieved”) – the Hebrew drill down on the word “broke” is PAIN...
- For those of you who have ever wondered if God feels pain, there is you answer

7 God said, “I’ll get rid of my ruined creation, make a clean sweep: people, animals, snakes and bugs, birds—the works. I’m sorry I made them.”

- Do you remember these characters (companions) from the Genesis story? In the Garden of Eden, God declared only one thing as “not good.” What was it? For man to be alone. So God made Adam a companion, animals, birds, and more! Now, as the

REAL PAIN of our sin encounters God's righteous heart, God has a regret – I'm sorry I made them.

- VS 7 – Where is the grace? Aren't we expecting some? Instead, we read, "I'm sorry I ever made them." It seems that in place of grace, we hear pain. It is anger out of hurt. It is anger out of pain. It is anger out of frustration.
- This sounds a lot like how we have become so passionate about school shootings and other events of our time, lately. We have well-intended laws that are supposed to give us the right to never suffer under the oppression of dictatorships, but instead of accomplishing that good, sin and brokenness muck it all up! Our anger is out of hurt! It's anger out of pain! It's anger out of frustration!

We are great at applying this biblical principal to others. Shooters, terrorists, racists, and others. But what about us? What about our sins? What about the times when we just look the other way? What

about the times we become inactive or complicit with other who sin?

Or, we do things that we consider “less sin?”

Quick Discussion

Do you think that God has some kind of “sin scale” up in heaven? In other words, if we are fishing for sin, do we say, “That’s about a 10-ouncer, throw that one back, it does not count?” Or, “YIKES, this one is an 8-pounder...we have a keeper!”

Leader’s Remark

We fail to see that it was not the size of the sine that PAINS God’s heart. It is the quantity. ALL SIN, ALL THE TIME. Their hearts where set on hurting God’s heart because they let sin rule them.

- Will we remember that our sin causes God’s heart to ache before we commit it? Will that chance our choices

Let's look at someone who did make different choices. Who was not perfect, but who, because of his devotion to God, ultimately played a role on the world stage that led to a covenant with God that still is in play today and will be forevermore.

Genesis 6:8, MSG

8 But Noah was different. God liked what he saw in Noah.

- V8 – Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. He was different than all the other stuff on the world stage that God was noticing.
- And, Noah is chosen to act as an ambassador of God because God liked him. Noah walked with God and God walked with Noah.

Sounds a lot like what God did with Adam and Eve from last week.

Quick Question:

Does how we live; the choice we are making, make us likable to God, or are we giving God's heart pains?

Noah walked with God, he and his family had integrity. He was an upright man in his community.

Genesis 6:11-13, MSG

11-12 As far as God was concerned, the Earth had become a sewer; there was violence everywhere. God took one look and saw how bad it was, everyone was corrupt (destroyed) and corrupting (destroying) – life itself corrupt (destroyed) to the core.

- The drilldown on the word “corrupt” in the ancient Hebrew is “destroyed.” Reread the passage with this in mind.
- We have misread this story, time after time, that God destroyed the earth with a flood. That is not what happened! From God’s point of view, we destroyed the earth with our fleshly appetites for sin and destruction... ALL THE TIME! ALL THE PEOPLE!

Have you ever heard the saying that if you plant an orange seed, and avocado tree will grow? NO!

- If you plant an orange seed, an orange tree will grow.
- If you plant an avocado seed, and avocado tree will grow.
- In other words, whatever you sow, you reap. So if you sow something that is what you are going to get. If you sow destruction, you will be destroyed.
- What are YOU sowing? Do not make this about others! Make this about yourself!

13 God said to Noah, “It’s all over. It’s the end of the human race.

The violence is everywhere; I’m making a clean sweep!”

Those are heavy words from the broken heart of God.

Genesis 6:14-17, MSG

14-16 “Build yourself a ship (an ark) from teakwood (Hebrew: Ark is tevah, or a box with a lid on it – like the Ark of the Covenant). Make rooms in it. Coat it with pitch inside and out. Make it 450 ft. long, seventy-five ft. wide, and forty ft. high. Build a roof on it and put in a window eighteen inches from the top; put in a door on the side of the ship; and make three decks: lower, middle, and upper (This represents the cosmos, earth’s atmosphere, and land, water and inhabitants.)

17 “I’m going to bring a flood on the Earth that will destroy everything alive under Heaven. Total destruction. (that were about to reap what they had sown. Then God make a promise to Noah...

Genesis 6:18-22, MSG-

18-21 But I’m going to establish a covenant with you: You’ll board the ship, and your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives will come on board with you. You are also to take two of each living creature, a male and a female, on board the ship, to preserve their lives with you:

two of every species of bird, mammal, and reptile – two of everything so as to preserve their lives along with yours. Also get all the food you'll need and store it up for you and them" (Notice, God didn't leave Noah alone, just like God didn't leave Adam alone. God knew that was not good. And, God gives Noah companions and animals and such and Noah responds in obedience.)

22 Noah did everything God commanded him to do.

- Do you see what God is doing here? God is taking all the things from creation, that populate the universe and the world and folding them up and putting them in a box with a lid on it, while the dominion of evil and fallen creation reaps what it has sown; and all hell breaks loose with the great flood. (We tend to clean this up – we lie and forget to tell our kids about the dead bodies)
- God takes it back to Genesis 1:1-3. The wind blows and dry land appears, the lid is taken off the box, God takes creation out of the Tevah, unfolds it, better than new. Recreation. Redemption.

- Why do you think the Bible would tell this story twice, in two different ways?
- Think about it! How many times does the bible tell the Christmas story (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*)?

Genesis 9:8-17, MSG

8-11 Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: “I’m setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you – birds, farm animals, wild animals – that came out of the ship with you. I’m setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth.”

12-16 God continued, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I’m putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the

covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll set it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth."

17 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I've set up between me and everything living on the Earth."

- In Chapters 8 and 9 – all the world is back in working order and God comes to a realization: However we are going to deal with sin, we're not going to deal with it by wiping the world out. That's not a good way to deal with it.
- This will tempt us to read this as if God makes mistakes. That's actually missing the whole point. God has regrets, yet. But the

regret was from God's pain; God's own broken heart for our choices and for our desire to sin.

Conclusion

Our sin is breaking God's heart, it causes God real pain. Shootings cause God pain. But so does a whole bunch of other sin. Are we ready to reap what we are sowing? We want mercy from ourselves and justice for others – o, how sad! No wonder God's heart breaks! The truth is, we reap what we sow. We love the merciful side of God, but we do not want the justice of God, except when applies to someone else. But there is a Tevah; an ark! For Noah, it was really good news. And for us, there is a NEW ARK, Jesus Christ! He's Good News for us! He is shielding us from God's justice and graciously doling out mercy! All we have to do is believe and obey His commands to love God and others! God's grace is that Christ gives mercy to everyone who believes.