

CHAOS VS ORDER

Noah and God's Covenant Genesis 9

Introduction

Genesis Chapter 9 is about God's Covenant with Noah & Creation. These first verses of Genesis 9 repeat some of the language God used with Adam and Eve when He blessed them.

After commanding Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, God speaks to them about subduing the animal kingdom. Noah's command to rule over the animal kingdom is different from the original version in Eden. Instead of commanding Noah to subdue the earth, God tells Noah and his sons that the animal kingdom will fear them. Every kind of animal life will fear mankind.

God promises that humanity will triumph over the animal kingdom and overcome even the fiercest of the animals. It seems now an adversarial relationship exists between man and animals, something else lost from the paradise of Eden due to man's sinfulness.

In verse 1, God gives instructions for living in a new world.

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood." (Genesis 9:1-4 NKJV)

The world Noah entered when he left the ark was significantly different from the world he knew before. Yet, God gave Noah the same mandate He gave Adam at the beginning of creation since Noah was essentially beginning all over again.

But now, Noah received specific permission to eat animals. Since man now could and would eat animals, God helped the animals by putting in them a fear of mankind. Presumably before the flood, man had a different relationship with the animals. God did not put this fear in animals because man did not look to them as food.

God also commanded Noah that if animals were killed and eaten, there must be a proper respect for the blood because it represents the life of the animal. The blood is an important theme in the Bible. It is used 424 times in the New King James Version. Respect for the blood is not based on mysticism or superstition. God says the blood represents the life of the being, whether animal or human. When blood is poured out, life is poured out.

- Blood was the sign of mercy for Israel at the first Passover in Exodus 12:13.

- Blood sealed God's covenant with Israel (Exodus 24:8).
- Blood sanctified the altar (Exodus 29:12).
- Blood consecrated the priests (Exodus 29:20).
- Blood made atonement for God's people (Exodus 30:10).
- Blood sealed the new covenant (Matthew 26:28).
- Blood justifies us (Romans 5:9).
- Blood brings redemption (Ephesians 1:7).
- Blood brings peace with God (Colossians 1:20).
- Blood cleanses us (Hebrews 9:14 and 1 John 1:7).
- Blood gives entrance to God's holy place (Hebrews 10:19).
- Blood sanctifies us (Hebrews 13:12).
- Blood enables us to overcome Satan (Revelation 12:11).

The life is in the blood!

I. God Endorses Capital Punishment

In verse 5, God gives mankind the right and responsibility of capital punishment.

"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. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it."
(Genesis 9:5-7 NKJV)

According to God's command, when someone kills another person, there must be an accounting for it because God made us in His image. Since we are made in the image of God, our life is inherently precious and cannot be taken without giving account to God. Because life is valuable and precious to God, when a person commits murder, they can be required to forfeit their own life. However, the Bible seems to make a distinction between killing and murder.

Not all killing is murder. There are cases where there is just cause for killing, such as self-defense, capital punishment with due process of law, or war that eliminates evil. There are also other instances where killing is accidental. The Bible also consistently teaches that the punishment of the guilty is the role of human government to restrain man's depravity.

Romans 13 says, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil."

(Romans 13:1-4 NKJV)

The Bible also says that the guilt of unpunished murder defiles a land in Numbers 35.

"Moreover, you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel." (Numbers 35:31-34 NKJV)

Martin Luther said, "God establishes government and gives it the sword to hold wantonness in check, lest violence and other sins proceed without limit."

God even says, "From the hand of every beast, I will require it." God's command even requires a reckoning from every animal for a person's life. God does not condone the unlawful killing of any kind.

II. God Makes A Covenant With Mankind

In verse 8, God makes a covenant with Noah and all of creation.

"Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."(Genesis 9:8-11 NKJV)

The covenant is made with all of mankind. God says, "For you and your descendants after you and every living creature that is with you." God promises He will never again destroy all the earth with a flood.

Spurgeon says, "It cheered my heart when thinking this matter over, to remember that although I depend upon covenant faithfulness, I am not alone in that dependence, for every living thing upon the face of the earth lives by virtue of the immutable covenant of God. Covenant engagements preserve the world from flood; were it not for that covenant, the tops of the mountains might be covered tomorrow."

God did not believe He did something wrong or was too harsh in bringing the flood. He made the promise because He did things in the post-flood world that would guarantee the exact evil conditions of the pre-flood world would never be precisely duplicated.

These things included the imprisonment of the angels who sinned with human women (Jude 6) and the shortening of the lifespan of humans. However, we know that Jesus said in Matthew 24 that when things again become *similar* to the days of Noah, God will again destroy the earth. But this time, it will be by fire, not by flood.

In 2 Peter 3, Peter says, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." For this, they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:1-7 NKJV)

III. The Sign of the Covenant

In verse 12, God gives Noah a sign of the Covenant.

"And God said: "This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth." (Genesis 9:12-17 NKJV)

This is a very impressive covenant between God and humanity and between God and all of creation, including the animals and the earth itself. God said, "I set my rainbow in the cloud." This is probably the first occurrence of a rainbow since the blanket of water vapors was released during the flood, and the earth's water cycle was changed. God uses the rainbow as a sign to Noah and all generations that He would be faithful to His covenant.

Every time we see a rainbow, we should remember the faithfulness of God and every one of His promises. God even says His covenant of peace with us is just as sure as His covenant with Noah and all generations.

Isaiah 54 says, "For this *is* like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would

not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you." (Isaiah 54:9-10 NKJV)

The rainbow is also mentioned in the context of God's enthroned glory (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3). The rainbow God chooses as a sign of His covenant is the one around His throne. It's impressive that the reminder of God's promise to mankind is so close to Him. Of course, God looks at the rainbow on the earth and remembers the covenant, but the rainbow of promise surrounds His throne. God is committed to remaining faithful to His covenant.

IV. Noah and his Sons

Verse 18 tells us about the sons of Noah.

"Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated." (Genesis 9:18-19 NKJV)

Noah's three sons emerged from the catastrophe of the flood into a completely new world. From these three sons of Noah came the nations as we know them. The descendants of these three sons are listed in the Table of Nations provided in Genesis 10.

Verse 20 records the sin of Noah's son, Ham. "And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness." (Genesis 9:20-23 NKJV)

Making his way into the new world after the flood, Noah began to provide for himself and his family. He probably planted many things, but among them was a vineyard. This is the first mention of drunkenness in the Bible. Noah's sinful and shameful actions show the foolishness of drunkenness.

Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine *is* a mocker, Strong drink *is* a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Proverbs 20:1 NKJV)

Proverbs 23 says, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, *When* it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things." (Proverbs 23:29-33 NKJV)

We know that alcohol is a depressant. It causes a person to lose their self-control, their wisdom, their balance, and their judgment.

The phrase became uncovered, and the connection to nakedness is sometimes associated with sexual relations. Some think Ham's sin was seeing Noah's drunken, uncovered state and that he made fun of him, mocking him as a father and a man of God. The ancient Hebrew says Ham "told with delight" what he saw in his father's tent.

In verse 24, Noah pronounces a curse upon Canaan. "So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: "Cursed *be* Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren." And he said: "Blessed *be* the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant." (Genesis 9:24-27 NKJV)

Noah knew what his younger son had done to him. This indicates that whatever happened to Noah, it was more than one of his sons or grandsons seeing his nudity, which may explain the strength of the curse. It seems strange that if Ham sinned against Noah, Canaan (Ham's son) is the one cursed unless Canaan joined his father in mocking Noah. Noah's strongest punishment against Ham may have been to prophetically reveal the destiny of his posterity.

Conclusion

Chapter 9 ends with a statement of how long Noah lived. "And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died." (Genesis 9:28-29 NKJV)

Noah was a remarkable man who served God faithfully in his generation. However, his final years do not seem to match the glory of his first years, which is a good reminder that we need to remain faithful throughout our lives, especially towards the end of our lives. Noah was a man of great triumph and weakness. His godliness is remembered in the New Testament, marking him as a man of faith.

Hebrews 11 says, "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 NKJV)

2 Peter 2:4 calls him a preacher of righteousness, "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; (2 Peter 2:4-5 NKJV)

It's important to remember that God does not expect us to be perfect but to be righteous.