

Lesson 6 – 7 March 2010

God's Perpetual Covenant

Lesson Scope: Genesis Chapters 8 and 9.

Lesson Focus

As Noah and his family emerged from the ark after the floodwaters had subsided, they had a new opportunity to live righteously in a cleansed environment. These eight survivors had witnessed God's wrath upon wickedness and should have been motivated to live righteously. God established His covenant with them, promising that natural patterns and processes of life on this earth would never again be interrupted by a global flood. Human life on the earth was off to a fresh start.

But evil passions stemming from man's depraved nature were not eradicated by the Flood. Therefore God established some basic laws to govern man's conduct. The Age of Conscience (as the pre-Flood era is sometimes called) had demonstrated sinful man's inability to control himself. Consequently, external restraint enforced by law was introduced to regulate the human race. God authorised civil government to make laws to keep order among men and to bring stability to nations and peoples.

The preservation of any society depends on men's response to God's fundamental laws. Man is responsible to follow those laws concerning his relationship to God, to man, and to the rest of creation. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). Let us highlight the immutability of God as you study this lesson. With God there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). He has established unchanging laws, both in nature and in the spiritual realm. These are for our benefit.

Let God's changelessness inspire us as we learn to respond acceptably to God's perpetual covenant.

Lesson Aim: To present unchanging principles that God has established for man's well-being on the earth.

Theme Verses: [Genesis 9:12-13](#).

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: I do set my bow in the loud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

Lesson Text

Natural Laws Decreed

[Genesis 8:20-22](#)

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. ²²While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

[Genesis 9:1-2](#)

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. ²And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

Moral Laws Instituted

[Genesis 9:3-7](#)

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. ⁴But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. ⁵And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. ⁶Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. ⁷And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

God's Covenant Remembered

[Genesis 9:8-17](#)

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

¹⁰And 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. ¹¹And 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. ¹²And 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: ¹³I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: ¹⁵And 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. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And 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.

Questions for Study

Natural Laws Decreed

1. Why was a burnt offering, needed immediately after God had purged the earth with a flood?
2. What does the predictability of natural laws tell us about God's nature?

Moral Laws Instituted

3. What spiritual lesson does the law prohibiting the eating of blood teach?
4. How does the death penalty serve the demands of God's justice?

God's Covenant Remembered

5. What is shown to us by God's promise to not again destroy the earth with a flood?
6. In what ways is the bow a fitting token of God's covenant?
7. How should we respond to our covenant-keeping God?

Analyzing the Passage

"Noah builded an altar" (Gen.8:20) is the first mention of an altar in the Scripture. A burnt offering is one wholly consumed by fire. Only clean beasts and fowls were offered. Seven of every clean animal were taken into the ark (Gen.7:2-3) making it possible for Noah to offer an acceptable ani-

mal sacrifice.

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. (Gen.8-.21) this similar statement is similar to one God made as a reason for sending the Flood (compare Genesis 6:5). After the Flood, man's imagination (thoughts, purposes, and desires) still tended toward evil. To control evil, God established moral laws.

"At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man" (Gen.9:5). Since God made of one blood all nations (Acts 17:26), he who kills another man slays his brother.

Note the universal scope of the covenant (Gen.9:9-11) and its token (Gen.9:12-13).

Principles and Applications

Natural Laws Decreed

1. Although the Flood brought a new beginning man's sinful nature had not changed (Gen.8:21). Noah and his sons possessed a sinful nature. "They could choose to serve God or to live as they pleased. God knew that man's heart tends toward evil and that the constraints of law were necessary to control man.

2. God promised that the natural cycles would continue as long to the earth exists (Gen.5:22). Never again would God interrupt the predictable cycles of the seasons with a disastrous flood. The continued regularity of the earth's orbit and its rotation confirms this promise of God to Noah. These established and constant natural laws witness to God's faithfulness and continually remind us of His covenant with Noah and with us.

3. After the Flood, God again commanded men to multiply and exercise dominion (Gen.9:1-2 and 7). This is a restatement of God's command to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28). God was giving the human race a second opportunity to fulfill His purpose for them.

Moral Laws Instituted

4. God gave man every living thing for food, but restricted him from eating the blood (Gen.9:3-4). It is implied that man had not used the meat of animals for food prior to the Flood. But, while giving man the liberty to eat meat, God prohibited him from eating blood. This restriction fostered a proper concept of the value of blood. Blood is the life of all flesh and was both the medium of man's reconciliation with God and a type of the precious blood of Christ.

5. Because human life is sacred, the murderer forfeits his own life. (Gen.9:5-6). Since man was created in God's image, He demands the death of the one who takes the life of any who bear that image. Though no such vengeance was taken on Cain for shedding Abel's blood, God established the principle of life for life to suppress violence, which had become uncontrolled prior to the Flood.

God's Covenant Remembered

6. God promised every living creature that He would never again destroy with a world wide flood. (Gen.9:8-11). This was the first covenant God made with man. God declared that this covenant is for perpetual generations. It is still in effect today. It demonstrates the reliability of God's promises and sets an example for us to be true to the promises we make.

7. God placed the bow in the cloud as the token of His covenant. (Gen.9:12-14 and 17). A rainbow is visible when there is rain and sunshine at the same time. Just as the rainbow signals that the rain is ending, so God shows His mercy in midst of judgement. Habakkuk prayed, "In wrath remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2). The bow continues to be an indication that God is remembering His covenant. The falling rain will not result in another worldwide flood.

8. God promised to look upon the bow and remember His covenant. (Gen.9:15-16). Since God does not have a problem with a faulty memory as we do He does not need to see a rainbow to remember His promise. But He places the bow in the cloud to show us that He is remembering. He wants us to look upon the bow and also remember its significance. It reminds us that God did indeed judge a wicked world with a flood and that He has promised never again to do so.

Important Teachings

1. Although the Flood brought a new beginning, man's sinful nature had not changed (Gen.8:21).

2. God promised that the natural cycles would continue as long as the earth exists (Gen.8:22).

3. After the Flood, God again commanded man to multiply and exercise dominion (Gen.9:1, 2, and 7).

4. God gave man every living thing for food, but restricted him from eating the blood (Gen.9:3-4).

5. Because human life is sacred, the murderer forfeits his own life (Gen.9:5-6).
6. God promised every living creature that He would never again destroy with a worldwide flood (Gen.9:8-11).
7. God placed the bow in the cloud as the token of His covenant (Gen.9:12-14 and 17).
8. God promised to look upon the bow and remember His covenant (Gen.9:15-16).

Answers to Questions

1. Why was a burnt offering needed immediately after God had purged the earth with a flood?

Though God removes our past sins when we repent of them, we still possess the sinful nature. We still fail at times and must seek pardon through the blood of Jesus. The Flood cleansed the earth of wickedness, but Noah and his family still had to deal with the sin problem. Noah's burnt offering demonstrated his faith in God for redemption.

2. What does the predictability of natural laws tell us about God's nature?

The constancy and consistency of natural laws show us that our God is unchanging. We can rely on His Word. God's promises that the laws of nature will remain as long as the earth stands remind us that He will keep His covenant regardless of man's response.

3. What spiritual lesson does the law prohibiting the eating of blood teach?

It teaches us the high regard God has for life. It causes us to recognize that life is in the blood. It reminds us that God is the giver of life. Therefore life is sacred.

Also, the blood atones for sin. Under the Old Testament the blood of animals atoned for sin. Under the New Testament, the precious blood of Jesus takes away the sin of the world.

4. How does the death penalty serve the demands of God's justice?

To take the life of another man created in God's image is truly an assault on God Himself. Human life is of high value in God's sight and must be regarded as sacred. Therefore, God requires blood for blood. The murderer was to be executed as just punishment for his crime and to serve as a warning to others.

5. What is shown to us by God's promise to not again destroy the earth with a flood?

This covenant was the first one God made with man. It shows us His commitment to be true to His Word regardless of man's failure to obey Him. This covenant sets an example for us to keep our promises. This covenant also shows God's willingness to extend mercy to man. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). In this covenant, God's patience and long-suffering shine forth.

6. In what ways is the bow a fitting token of God's covenant?

It is in the heaven, making it clearly a token placed there by God. The full range of colors in the rainbow illustrate the completeness and all-encompassing scope of the covenant. Since man cannot find the ends of the rainbow, so he discovers that God's perpetual covenant is truly without end.

7. How should we respond to our covenant-keeping God?

Our first response should be to worship Him. His faithfulness in keeping His covenant should prompt us to place our faith and trust in Him. We should cooperate with the natural laws He has established and keep the moral laws He has instituted. And, most of all, we should keep the promises and commitments we have made to Him.

Summarizing the Lesson

The sun continues to rise in the east and set in the west. Summer and winter arrive at regular intervals as expected. Why? Our unchanging, God has established a perpetual covenant to that effect.

"For ever O Lord thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth" (Psalm 119:89).

Research Guide

1. Study Scriptures that speak of God's immutability and of His covenant keeping when man did not keep his part of the covenant.

2. Research New Testament passages that teach our responsibility as Christians to obey civil government instituted by God for the punishment of evildoers. These include the command to pray for civil leaders, to obey laws, and to pay taxes as required.