

GOD'S COVENANT AND THE RAINBOW

Genesis 8:1 - 11:26

Key verses 9:11,12

"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come."

Last week we studied the first part about the Flood. We were encouraged by Noah, who lived a godly life in the midst of a world ready for judgment. He walked with God. He built the ark of salvation to the end through the obedience of faith. Through this, we could learn to resist the godless spirit of this age even in our generation. Let us walk with God by obeying one word of God to the end and leading young people to Jesus into the Ark of Salvation through one-to-one Bible study teams.

Today's passage tells us how God ended the flood and remembered Noah and everyone in the ark. Let us learn about the new beginning God gave and the covenant He established with men whose thoughts and actions are evil from childhood. Let us reflect on God's eternal covenant, which God finally sealed through the Messiah Jesus Christ and which opened the way of salvation through faith for all generations.

1. God remembered Noah (8:1 - 9:17)

In the previous lesson, we had seen that Noah built the ark in complete obedience - for 120 years. Following God's instructions, Noah and his wife, as well as his three sons with their wives, entered the ark, along with all the animals. God himself closed the door of the ark. Then the springs of the deep broke open, the floodgates of heaven opened, and a mighty flood began. Why did God bring such a mighty flood upon the earth?

God's heart was broken and He regretted having made human beings. At creation, God had been so pleased with man, saying, "It was very good!" But after the Fall, man's relationship with God was broken. People lived sinfully and ungodly. Noah alone and his house found favor with the LORD. The previous chapter ended with the report that the waters of the Flood surged mightily for 150 days, so that all breath of life on earth perished. Noah alone remained with what was with him in the ark. Chapter 8 now begins the account of the end of the Flood. Let's look at verses 1-3: "But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down." Humanly seen it looked as if the ark, arbitrarily and helplessly drifted over the water. But God directed and steered the ark according to His plan and to His goal. Everything was under God's special protection. God worked actively and nothing happened arbitrarily. God carried Noah and all who were with him in the ark constantly in his heart. Then God caused a wind to arise. He also clogged the fountains of the deep, closed the windows of heaven and stopped all the rain. Thus, the vast amounts of water ran off and diminished after 150 days. Look at verse 4: "and on the

seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat." How great must have been the joy of men and animals when the ark touched down safely on solid ground. But they could not yet get out and walk around. The earth was completely flooded with water. Now for all those in the ark another hard test arose, namely a long waiting period. It took until the tenth month for the tops of the mountains to be visible again. Forty days later, Noah opened the window of the ark to let a raven fly, it kept flying back and forth. After that, a dove, which came back again, because it had not yet found a place to live. When another dove returned with an olive branch in its beak, Noah waited another seven days. In verses 10 and 12, Noah's patience is described as "waiting." This waiting expresses an irrepressible longing for God to intervene. Noah, however, did not become impatient. He waited for God's time. We too may wait patiently for God's best time.

In the midst of this pandemic, many people are impatient. We may wait, like Noah, for God to bring us out again at His best time and use us for world mission. We believers are also waiting for God to give a new spiritual hunger, for people to begin to ask about God again and to find direction through His Word. We wait and pray from early morning on for the work of spiritual revival to happen soon in Germany, Europe and even in the Muslim world. In the last two years, God has trained us through trials and persecutions. Now we are waiting for God's sovereign hand and best guidance that we will be used for the pioneering of 1,700 universities in Europe and for the M mission. Just as Noah opened the window and waited for the day of leaving the ark to come, we were also allowed to open wide "our windows" of early morning prayer, master classes, leadership seminars, also the window of GLEF. We experienced the powerful work of God among the Next Generation and among students. Let us actively "open the windows" of prayer and one-to-one Bible study teams at each campus during the winter semester and serve with determination the young people

who are waiting for the invitation to the Word of God and to encounter Jesus.

Let's look at 8:13-16: "By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives." On the 27th day of the second month, 371 days after the flood began, Noah and all who were with him got out of the ark. What would be the first thing you would do if you could leave the ark after a little over a year? Let's look at what Noah did and read verse 20: "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." Noah was the first to build an altar to the Lord. This was an expression of his deep gratitude to God who had saved him in the midst of the flood. From Noah we learn the importance of giving thanks. He who has learned to give thanks to God is a blessed man. But he who does not give thanks (or forgets to give thanks) easily becomes a plaything of the devil. Let us remember anew the grace of God on our lives; also the grace of God on our family and our nation. Let us thank God with all our hearts for His mighty work in the past 41 years. At the coming anniversary service, we may build God the altar of thanksgiving for his mighty work and renew his vision and hope in our hearts.

Let's look at verse 21: "The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." God was very pleased with the sweet smell of the sacrifice of thanksgiving that Noah offered to Him. God said that He would no longer curse the earth for man's sake, although man's thoughts and actions are evil from childhood. It is the spiritual reality that people are evil from childhood. Yet how great is God's promise never to let another flood

come upon the earth. The lovely smell of Noah's thank offering greatly pleased God and made Him rest in the face of man's sin.

Chapter 9 tells of God's covenant with Noah. We would like to read the leading verses 9:11,12: "I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come." God established a covenant with Noah. God promised not to destroy the earth by a flood anymore. Actually, because of the sin and corruption of mankind, God would have every reason to judge the earth again and again from the end of the Flood until today. But God is faithful and he stands by his covenant that he made with Noah. As a sign of this covenant between Himself and the earth, God placed His bow, the rainbow, in the clouds. This covenant is an eternal and worldwide covenant. When weather clouds come and it rains and the sun shines, we see God's beautiful rainbow shining! We rejoice when we see the rainbow, take our phones and take beautiful pictures, don't we? Whenever the rainbow shines, we too may remember the covenant God made with us sinful humans (with me/with you)! Our God is a God of the covenant. God is absolutely faithful - where we are unfaithful again and again. Although God already knew what unfaithful and proud sinners we are, the covenant God made with Noah was already the beginning of a new relationship between God and man.

In our time, there is often a misconception that man is good. Humanism teaches that it is not sin but adverse conditions that are to blame for man's unhappiness. Even many Christians think that at least they had a good intention. But verse 21 teaches us the spiritual reality: "Man's heart is evil from childhood!" The punishment of the Flood failed to change people. Even with all our efforts, we cannot change. We are and remain helpless sinners whose hearts are evil from childhood. We may acknowledge the fact that we are incorrigible sinners who deserve nothing but

God's judgment. Acknowledging oneself as a sinner is the first step in accepting the gospel.

Romans 3:23 describes our spiritual condition as follows: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Without exception, all people are sinners and need redemption. But where does redemption come from? God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. He, who was without sin, offered Himself in our place on the cross as the pure and perfect sacrifice. This sacrifice of Jesus on the cross became a pleasing aroma, which God accepted once and for all for the redemption of mankind. Whoever believes in Jesus and accepts the substitutionary sacrifice on the cross is saved. Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19,20: "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

The covenant that God began with Noah, he has confirmed through Jesus Christ and even made it a new covenant. Hebrews 9:15 says of Jesus, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." God invites you to enter into His new covenant. It is not by descent, not by works, but by faith that we can enter into the eternal covenant of God. We may acknowledge that we are incorrigible sinners from childhood, and take hold of His forgiving grace by faith. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." And Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Whoever accepts God's new covenant in Christ by faith belongs to God's holy nation of remnant in the

midst of this corrupt, sinful race. Mark 16:16 says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." We may live by faith, like Noah, like Abraham, and like numerous predecessors of faith. We may live as a holy remnant and as holy seeds for the building of the Kingdom of God in this generation. Pray that God will bless our life together and disciple-making ministry through one-to-one Bible study teams in the winter term and raise up numerous spiritual descendants through which all 1,700 universities in Europe will be populated and three bases for the M mission will be established.

Without God's eternal covenant, I would have remained a completely helpless and lost sinner. How could I ever come out of my self-love, arrogance, pride, lust and unkindness? This was possible solely because Jesus made the new covenant with me. Through the Word of God Luke 23:34a, I personally heard Jesus' prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Today, I may renew the heart of God for the sinful world. I may invite young people to enter God's covenant of grace through faith and begin a new and changed life in Jesus.

2. Noah's Descendants and the Tower of Babel (9:18 - 11:26)

Chapter 9 goes on to report that Noah had planted a vineyard. Noah rejoiced in the abundant harvest and he vinified the most for the first time. He probably did not yet know that fermentation produces alcohol. Then, when he had drunk too much of the sweet wine, his youngest son, Ham, came and saw his father lying exposed in the tent. The bad thing was that he despised his father and, to make matters worse, told his brothers about it. This incident reveals the proud and contemptuous heart of Ham. Instead of covering his father, he shamelessly exploited this incident and disgraced his father. Ham's contemptuous attitude toward his father admonishes us to have spiritual respect for our parents and God's servants. Ephesians 6:2 says, "Honor your father and mother"—which is the

first commandment with a promise—"When we despise our parents, superiors, teachers or servants of God and speak haughtily about them, we lose the blessing of God. Ham no longer received a blessing and Noah's curse came upon Ham's son Canaan. Verse 25 says, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

Chapter 10 is the chapter of the table of nations. We are presented with the families of Noah's sons. In fact, the whole history of mankind goes back to these three families: Mr. and Mrs. Shem, Mr. and Mrs. Ham, Mr. and Mrs. Japheth. The table of nations mentions 70 names, symbolic of the number of all nations. The "70" in Judaism is the number of perfection. Here it symbolizes the totality of nations through which the whole world was populated from now on.

Let us look at chapter 11:1-26. The pride and arrogance of the people finally culminated in the building of the Tower of Babel. Let us read 11:3,4: "They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.'" They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." In their arrogance, people wanted to make a name for themselves. God created man for God's glory. But fallen man seeks his own glory and exalts himself above his Creator. Let us do everything we do for the glory and glorification of God. For God's glory, we may be creative and work diligently. Samuel Abraham and Joshua studied diligently for their high school graduation this year. They did not do this for their own glory, but glorified God with their victory of faith.

What was the result of the Tower of Babel? The proud people angered God. Let's look at verses 5-7: "But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. And the LORD said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go

down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." As a result of the arrogant building of the tower, God confused the language of the people. Let us read verses 8 and 9: "So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth."

The genealogy from Shem to Abram (11:10-26) reveals God's continuing history. Shem's line continues in 10 generations to Abraham. Abraham became the progenitor of the nation of Israel. And from his line came the Messiah. The evangelist Matthew writes about the history of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Mt 1:1). If we look at the development of mankind after the Flood, we find that God's word to Noah is true: the inclinations of the human heart are evil from childhood (9:21b). Yet God did not abandon this sinful world. The earth was repopulated on every continent. And God testifies to this day of His love and mercy to sinful humanity. Over good and evil he makes the sun rise. God also keeps his promise that sowing and reaping, frost and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not cease as long as the earth stands. God's heart's desire is for sinful people to know and accept God's love and saving grace in Christ.

Today, we have learned from Noah to wait on the Lord at all times and follow His leading. Through Noah's thank offering, the heart of God was moved that God established a covenant with him. Although the heart of man is evil from childhood, God has established a new covenant with us incorrigible sinners in Jesus. Let us accept this perfect sacrifice of Jesus in faith and give our new life as a holy, living sacrifice pleasing to God for the world mission. Let us pray to invite young people to the new covenant with Jesus through 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams this winter semester and prepare for spiritual revival in Germany, Europe and the Muslim world.