

GENESIS

Lesson 8 - Chapters 8 and 9

READ Genesis 8 all

Just as chapter 7 began with the comforting words that God invited the righteous family of Noah into the safety of the Ark, chapter 8 tells us that God “remembered” Noah. But, the verse doesn’t stop there; it says He also remembered all the living things that came into the Ark with Noah. I cannot stress enough how important God’s living creatures.....what we typically call animals.....are to God. Man is certainly a bit above the animals, placed into dominion over the animals, yet we’re made of the same stuff as the animals; the dust of the ground. And, God put that same neshemah, spirit of life, into both animals and mankind. I’m not trying to be an advertisement for PETA. I’m saying that we lose sight of the fact that animals were not throw-aways. No doubt, early in Genesis when God had the animals parade by Adam as he named them, we must not forget that Adam was also given the opportunity to select one of them as a companion. Not in the sense of a wife, but as a friend. And, no doubt, this was to show us the place man has.....slightly above the animals.....but also the loving importance God places on His living creatures.

I only point this out, because if I can be permitted to attach a human emotion to God, it was a terrible thing the day God had to kill an animal or two to make animal skin clothing to cover Adam and Eve; it would have grieved Him greatly. And, it grieved Him when, for His own good reasons, it became necessary for animals to be slain on a regular basis for blood sacrifice, in order to atone for men’s sins. And, it must have grieved Him yet again, when for reasons I cannot fathom, the Father of all things instructed Noah and his descendants that they could now kill countless thousands, and then millions, of His beloved living creatures for food. This was a HUGE matter. When we’re told that God **knows** when a sparrow falls from the sky, it’s because that sparrow is one of His living creatures who no longer lives. Not “knowing” the sparrow in the sense that a single dollar is important to an accountant reconciling his books; rather, because God put His Life Spirit into that creature, and now it was extinguished. We too often look at that verse only from the viewpoint of how important man is.....because it also says he numbers the hair on our heads. But, that’s not the entire point it is that even a bird is important to Him. So, WAY before Jesus came to the world, God was watching His living creatures die on account of mankind’s sin.

The 2nd half of verse 1 uses a word that is familiar to us. It says that God brought a “rushing wind” across the earth, to push back the waters. The Hebrew word used here is ruach. In Hebrew, Holy Spirit is Ruach HaKodesh. Ruach is commonly used in the OT as a word to describe God’s spirit, or sometimes “spirit” in general. So, this rushing wind was more than just a weather event; the wind was real and literal, but it also involves the idea that this wind had a spiritual component as it was “of God”. Another example of the Reality of Duality.

After 150 days of the water rising, the water receded for the next 150 days.

The wooden Ark had bobbed around in the floodwaters, until it came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat.....NOT Mt. Ararat, a specific peak...rather, somewhere on top of one of the mountains of the extensive Ararat mountain range that is in modern day Turkey. And, we're told the precise day: the 7th month, the 17th day of the month. But, it would be awhile before they could disembark. Forty more days passed, and Noah sent out a Raven, a scavenger bird, an Unclean animal. It didn't come back, which indicated it had found food, likely dead things, and a place to nest, likely in the now uncovered mountaintops. Next a dove, a CLEAN animal, was sent out, but it returned indicating that it had no food source or place to nest. A week later Noah sent out another dove, and this time it returned with a green, freshly picked Olive tree leaf in its beak. Another week passes, and the dove doesn't return, indicating that the water had receded to the tree line, or below. Quite remarkably, it is well known by Olive growers that they never have to fear flooding that would drown normal trees.....for an Olive branch will actually bear leaves while under the water.

It is so interesting to note that for some reason, God wants us to know the exact month to the day, that certain stages of the flooding, and its receding, occurred. For instance, we see that on the FIRST month, the FIRST day.....that is, the first day of a new year, as the Jews call it, Rosh Hoshanna, it was safe to remove the covering over the Ark, and all that remained was for the ground to dry up enough for the Ark's inhabitants to set foot on it again. It was on the 2nd month, the 27th day, that God instructed Noah that he could now resume life on the soil of the earth.

How interesting it is that the selfsame flood that destroyed the old also purified and made way for the new. Death of that which was corrupted was needed in order to prepare for new life. And, again, we have a type and a shadow of what was to come. For Christ, called Living Water in the NT, is what this all pointed to. Our old natures die, and we are purified through this Living Water. And, it sets up all the symbolic meaning of water baptism. Through death, we are brought to new life.

Noah well understood, by now, the impact of what had just transpired. And, in verse 20, in an absolutely appropriate response, he built an Altar and sacrificed of EVERY kind of CLEAN animal to the Lord. The first act of the new order of mankind was to honor God. Yet, as we'll soon see, this newly purified world, beginning in righteousness, thoroughly understanding sin and its awful and destructive consequences, would not stay clean for long.

But, this sacrifice of Noah also shows us at least one rather important reason that God ordered that 14..... that is, 7 pairs....of clean animals were brought on board the Ark. If Noah was going to sacrifice from every single species of clean animal (which he did), had there been only a single pair of each clean species brought on board, this first sacrifice would have signaled the extinction of that species. Right? Further, by performing this series of sacrifices, Noah affirmed that he would take up the mantle of the line of Seth: the godly line of people. BTW: what were the unclean animals used for? Why were they even retained, instead of just being allowed to die out in the flood? Well, without getting too graphic, later on we will find that several of the unclean variety of animals lives on a scavenger diet. The corpses of dead

people and animals must have been strewn everywhere as the waters receded. These animals would have thrived on this huge “food” supply, and they certainly served a useful purpose, cleaning up the landscape, just as vultures and other scavengers do today.

And, we should not forget the principle of our Universe that EVERYTHING HAS AN OPPOSITE. If there was clean THERE HAD TO BE unclean. But, I also want to make something quite clear about that which God ordains as UNCLEAR; by no means are all unclean animals scavengers. In fact, there appears to be no behavior pattern, nor physical characteristic, no particular kind of food they eat, or any other thing that we can put our finger on to understand WHY God designated certain animals to be unclean. There have been many theories put forth, but absolutely none hold water. We simply need to grasp that God is sovereign; that He makes decisions and choices that He usually doesn't reveal the reasoning behind. So, if you leave here tonight with one understanding about clean and unclean let it be this: Unclean animals are not some broad category of BAD animals; clean animals are not inherently BETTER than unclean animals; unclean animals are not DEFECTIVE animals, nor are they animals of LESS IMPORTANCE to God. They are nothing neither more nor less than a choice made by the Creator for His own good reason. And, He has never shared the reasoning behind that choice with mankind.

The last 2 verses of chapter 8 reveal a couple of important pieces of information: 1) that God accepted Noah's sacrifices; He found them pleasing. 2) That God was never again going to destroy all land inhabiting creatures the way he had just finished doing: with a deluge of water. And, 3) please notice the phrase in verse 21 that says: **“.....since what the human heart forms is evil from its youth....”**

The human heart forms evil from its youth. What could be a more direct admission by The Almighty than this, that man has a problem; he has evil in him. As we discussed last week, where's any reference to Satan? Where does God pin the problem of evil in mankind on the Devil? He doesn't. Don't get me wrong: Satan is real, and he entices men to do evil. But, Satan did NOT CREATE evil; Satan was a created being just like anything else and HE made a moral choice and became evil embodied to the fullest. Rather, he simply takes advantage of the evil inclination that is in us, by means of deception. Where it says heart forms evil “from its youth”, “from its youth” is written as **mine'araw** in Hebrew. This literally means “from his awakening.” So, perhaps a better rendering of that phrase would be: **“.....since what the human heart forms is evil from his awakening.”** Rabbi Judan (one of the great ancient Jewish sages) explains that this means from the time a human has awareness. The sages argued whether awareness took place in the womb or immediately upon birth, or very shortly thereafter. But, either way, the point is that ALL persons are born with hearts that “form” evil. That is what is being said here in Verse 21. And, it is NOT saying that a human heart is ONLY evil.....not at all. It is not saying that babies are automatically born with a 100% evil inclination. We are NOT born 100% evil. If you don't know God from a peanut, you are not 100% evil. No, this important statement by God is simply acknowledging that everyone is born with an evil inclination; but, due to the principle of opposites, everyone is also born with a good inclination as well.

A question was asked of me last week, when did God abandon the Garden of Eden? Well, up

to the flood, apparently man looked towards the Garden when communicating with God. From here on in the Bible, post-flood, we will see that God now looks DOWNWARD to man, and man UPWARD to God. So, we know that just as whatever remained of the Garden was destroyed by the Flood, God now communicated with Man from his Heavenly realm, and it would be a long time before He would re-establish a place where He would dwell with mankind.....and it happened in Moses' day with the building of the Wilderness Tabernacle.

Immediately following the Flood, the Earth was a very different place from what it had been just a few short months earlier. The Oceans were more extensive, and therefore, there was less land surface than before the Flood. The land was nearly barren of vegetation and devoid of animal life. The mist that enveloped the air and watered the vegetation was gone. The formerly even and temperate world climate had more radical swings. Seasons became more pronounced, and as a result, more important because the growth of plants for food depended on temperature, and certain amounts of sunlight to be present. And, most dramatically, only 8 people and a handful of animals were left to inhabit, and then to repopulate, the entire surface of the earth.

But, more than that, we see this: Noah was the new Adam. From him would all mankind spring. You and I are all related to Noah, even more closely than we are to Adam. But, Noah and Adam operated from very different paradigms.....their situations were quite at opposite poles. Adam was created as perfection, and created into a world of absolute perfection. He was created in the image of God. Noah, though, was born into a world of Imperfection. For, although Noah was declared righteous in God's eyes, Noah, just like us, was born with a fallen nature into a fallen world. Because Noah trusted and obeyed God, God simply declared Noah righteous. This most fundamental principle of Salvation.....trusting God and being credited (as opposed to earning) righteousness..... is the same exact principle that we all count on today; and it is present right here in the OT, in Genesis. As Adam was created in the image of God, so Noah was "created", so to speak, in the image of Adam. An era ended and a new one had begun. This universally sinful state of the world, of which Noah was the patriarch, represented the NEW basis of how God would deal with the post-flood world and all its aspects.....quite apart from how it was for Adam..... quite apart from how it would be with the eventual advent of Christ.....and still quite apart from how it will be someday in the not too distant future.

We are going to see the tremendous differences between the Old World before the Flood, and the New post-flood world, immediately as we start to read Genesis 9.

READ Genesis 9 all

The great changes in the governing dynamics of man's existence, in his relationship to his environment, and in his responsibilities before God are evident right away in V2: whereas animals were once fearless, trusting, and in willing subjection to man before the Flood, now God ordains that man's dominion over animals will be by force. The very same animals that so docilely appeared before Adam to be named, will now be terrified of man. V3 tells us that meat is no longer a prohibited food for man; animal flesh is now an approved food source. I've

heard people ask how it was the Noach got all those “wild animals” to enter the Ark; simple: before the Flood man had a different relationship with animals than after.

Verse 2 also gives us an opportunity to put a little common sense back into reading the Bible. Do not ever think that the words written do not mean what they say. Yet, they mean what they mean in the common sense of the Hebrew culture of that day. It says here that ALL animals will fear and dread man. Now, the fact is, we know full well that not 100% of all animals fear men.....never have. Many animals are quite comfortable with men, because they have been domesticated and raised for that purpose. Sheep learned their Shepherd's own voice. Without getting into too much detail, just think of common pets like dogs and cats that certainly don't fear men. The point is this: when the Bible says everything, or every, or all, it means it in a general sense. All or everything does not mean 100.00%; rather it means “it is the general rule but there are likely a handful of exceptions”. We might say it means “the vast majority”. Think of how we commonly talk; we say things like “everybody is against me”; or everything I do turns out bad; or I always take the same route home. It's a figure of speech. So, we have to be very careful not to read in some theological absolute into these sorts of statements when none was intended.

Now, though every living creature was OK for food, there was a very strict prohibition placed on the eating of meat, and it was that man could not eat the blood from an animal. The reason? The blood is where the life is. Blood was only to be used for sacrifice, and never for human consumption. For blood, the seat of life, was simply too holy for man to be allowed to partake of it.

And, we see that the importance of blood is carried over from animals, to humans. For murder, the taking of human blood is specifically prohibited. Notice that in V5 that God hands the duty of meting out justice for the murder of a human, over to man. Up to now, God dealt with it Himself. And, He dealt with it very differently because now we see that a man who kills another man, is to be himself killed..... by other men. Remember the penalty for murder when Cain, Kayin, killed his brother Abel? It was banishment from the presence of God. God even went so far as to place a sign over Cain so that others would not be tempted to take matters into their own hands, and harm Cain. Mere separation from God was sufficient punishment.

What the ancient Rabbis so brilliantly point out concerning these passages, is that here we find God establishing the principle of earthly government. Civil law was hereby created, with God delegating some of His authority to man. Later, in Leviticus, God would go to great lengths to define something that we constantly try to rewrite, with little success: what justice is. We tend to call God's definition of justice, the LAW.

These same Rabbis and Scribes also came to the conclusion that if God turned over to man the terrible matter of determining capital punishment, the right to take human life, then certainly lesser matters of life such as authority over wives, children, servants, property, land, etc. was also now in man's hands. From this came what was eventually called the 7 Noachide Laws. The Noachide Laws were essentially the most fundamental principles of civil justice as told by God to Noah, from which all other civil laws would be based. We don't actually see these 7 laws specifically enumerated at this point in the Scriptures. Interestingly, though, thousands of

years later, after Christ has come and gone, these Noachide Laws will play a role in the determination of the Jerusalem Council of 49 AD as to the minimum behavioral requirements for gentiles who want to fellowship with, and worship alongside of, Jews who have come to believe that Jesus was their Messiah.

These Noachide Laws are the following: 1) Men were prohibited from idol worship. 2) Man was not to commit blasphemy (taking God's name in vain). 3) Man was not to murder. 4) There was to be no incest. 5) There was to be no robbing and stealing. 6) Man was not to eat blood nor was he to eat the meat of animals that had been strangled (and therefore, they had not been "bled"). 7) Man was to submit to the authority of a civil government.

Next, in verse 8, God makes a covenant. As we meet Abraham in a couple more weeks, we'll talk a little more about the important nature of covenants. But, for now, just recognize that this covenant is a contract, a promise; in this case it is between God and Noah....BUT.....it is also promise from God to ALL living flesh. This particular covenant, or contract, is unilateral; the contract does NOT depend on man's response nor man's behavior.....its all on God. Other covenants we will eventually encounter have a mutual requirement.....both God and man have roles to play. And, this is the first covenant between God and Man mentioned in the Torah. There is a theological belief that this covenant with Noah is actually the 2nd covenant with mankind; that the 1st was between God and Adam; and it was that if Adam didn't eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, man could stay in the Garden with God. Well, personally, I think that waters down the impact of the concept of covenant. Certainly God gave Adam an instruction not to eat of that tree, but just because the idea was that if he disobeyed there would be a penalty does NOT make that single instruction to attain the level of a covenant.

And, the covenant is this: God will never again destroy the world and everything in it..... by flood. Of course, God did leave the door open to destroy the world by just about any OTHER means, but that's another story. Anyway, the sign of this covenant is the Rainbow. Now, while I don't want to spend much time with this, the question often comes, was this the first Rainbow? And, my unequivocal answer to this is.....MAYBE!

Here's the thing, God set many physical things in the heavens to be used as signs. He didn't necessarily come up with a new one each time He felt a sign was necessary. The physics of light, and refraction as it passes through moisture, is well understood. And, we know it is NOT necessary for actual rain to occur in order to have a Rainbow.....we just need a sufficient amount of water content in the atmosphere. However..... almost universally, among the ancient and modern Biblical scholars, the conclusion is that this WAS the first Rainbow..... so, I see no reason to belabor the point, nor to dispute it.

But, I would like to point out this matter of God saying when He looked upon the Rainbow that HE would remember His covenant with all living things to not bring an end to things again with a flood. As we discussed a couple of weeks ago, statements of this sort are figurative. God is not a man, and He does not have human attributes. God is not some kind of Super Human....He is a wholly separate and different being than a man. Nor is man some type of lesser gods. God doesn't need to have His memory jogged. He doesn't need an enormous notepad to remember what He has promised. But, I also imagine that for many generations

from Noach, as the flood was relatively fresh in people's minds, that each time it rained, there was a little bit of anxiousness as they waited for the rain to STOP! And, how reassuring it must have been to look up and see that Rainbow in the sky, and remember the promise that God had made. Maybe it would do us all good to remember that the beautiful Rainbow that is so common for us to see, and without much thought, is in fact a sign from God. That hasn't changed just because a few thousand years have passed from Noach to our day.