

Session 2

June 9, 2024

GOD'S PROMISE OF PRESERVATION

Genesis 9:1-13

The story of Noah is an epic adventure. It is filled with drama and excitement, and twists and turns. And it has some great lessons to teach along the way. The story captures a turning point for creation in general and for mankind in specific. Some things have changed; some things present conditions; and some things are confirmed.

Changes (vv. 1-3). Here, the instructions given to Adam in Genesis 1:28 are restated. Even though the initial population of the earth had been wiped out (except for Noah and his family), God's design for humanity had not changed. They were to be abundant in their fruitfulness and expansive in their migration (v. 1). God's design included man's complete domination of the world. But there were some significant changes. First, there was the issue of *fear* (v. 2). Up to this point, animals and people coexisted in absolute harmony. Their sojourn together in the ark demonstrated that quite clearly. But things were different now. Creation had been altered in both its geography and in its zoology. For the very first time, God made animals afraid of people. Second, there was the issue of *food* (v. 3). Up to this point, people were essentially vegetarians (see Gen. 1:29-30). But again, things have changed. For the very first time, men (and some of the animals) were allowed to eat meat. For reflection: *Why do you think this dietary change was made? Was it out of necessity? Is a meat diet better than a vegetarian diet? Is one "more right" than the other?*

Conditions (vv. 4-7). The allowance of meat in the diet was not without certain conditions. Here, the emphasis is not on the flesh and blood, but on the sanctity of life itself. Since the life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11), people were forbidden to eat the flesh while still bloody. Verse 5 is very awkward, but the sense is fairly clear. Simply put, the shedding of blood is a sacred thing, because it requires a living thing to die. This is the reason a blood sacrifice was required for atonement; for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). Remember, the emphasis is still on the supremacy of humanity. Hence, animals may be killed for food, but an animal that kills a person must be put to death (v. 5). Besides the ceremonial significance associated with atonement, these conditions had a practical purpose: to prevent the cruel and wanton taking of human life. What was instituted to protect Cain specifically in Genesis 4:15 was applied here to everyone. No one has the right to take a life outside the proscribed laws of God who created human life and did so in His own image (v. 6). Notice how the Lord moved them from that prohibition back to the main task at hand: "But you, be fruitful and multiply" (v. 7). For reflection: *The use of capital punishment (the death penalty) has always been controversial. What does this text seem to say about the subject?*

Confirmations (vv. 8-15). The word *covenant* appears six times in these verses, and twice God used the word *confirm*. The promise itself is spelled out in verse 11 and restated in verse 15: that God would never again destroy the earth and its life by flood. Three features stand out. First, this promise is *unconditional*. Every time the word covenant appears, it is referenced to God. It is *HIS* covenant; it is not based on man's commitment, obedience, or actions. Hence, it's more like a decree. Second, His covenant is *universal*. That is, it applies to Noah, his descendants, all

living things, and even the earth in general (v. 11). Third, His covenant is *signified*. That is, it is marked by a visible, tangible reminder: the rainbow. This would not be the only covenant marked with a sign (see Gen. 17:10 ff), but it was the first. Note that the rainbow is to act as a reminder. God said it would remind Him (v. 15), but the assumption is that it would remind us as well. Since the flood marked the first rain that fell upon the earth (see Gen. 1:5-6), the appearance of the colorful rainbow in the sky would have been quite remarkable to Noah and his family. For reflection: *I think that rainbows are still beautiful, and I can't help but stop and stare at them! Does it bother you that God's covenant rainbow has been hijacked by a liberal social agenda?*