

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Back to the Beginning: Noah and his family after the Flood (Genesis 9:1-28)

Today we come to the fourth talk in our present series, "Back to the Beginning". We have been looking at the book of Genesis with its teaching of the true history of the world and mankind. In the three previous talks, we have looked at: "Noah before the Flood" in Genesis 6:1-7:9; "The Flood" in Genesis 7:10-24; and "The aftermath of the Flood" in Genesis 8:1-22. Our title for today's talk is, "Noah and his family after the Flood" and we will consider mainly Genesis 9:1-28 but we will also include Genesis 10 and 11.

Stepping out of the ark, Noah immediately built an altar unto the LORD and offered burnt offerings. From Genesis 8:20-22, we get a wonderful insight into the thoughts of God at this time and are assured that "*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*" (Genesis 8:22). Genesis 9 begins, "*And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Genesis 9:1). But in Genesis 11 we see how God had to bring in judgement, confounding their language at Babel and scattering mankind across the face of the earth. At the beginning of Genesis 12, God takes up Abram in a particular way and it is something of a new beginning in the Ways of God. So we could say that the subject of our talk today is a complete dispensation, seen in the way God dealt with Noah and his family after the flood until the time of Abram, which was a period of some 427 years.

Now I know that not every Christian will readily agree to being a 'dispensationalist', but I want to make an appeal to any who doubt, to see the way which God deals with Noah and his family after the Flood in contrast with His prior dealings with them. Although God never changes, He does deal in different ways with mankind in different periods of history. The idea behind the word 'dispensation' is a stewardship, an administration, an economy or dealing out - a period of time during which God deals with man in a particular, distinguishable way in the outworking of His purpose. The greatest of these is the difference between Law and Grace - Israel and the Church - the old and new economy. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews (who I believe was the Apostle Paul), contrasts the two systems and we are left in no doubt that believers of today have the 'better' things in Christ in contrast to the 'good' things which Israel had under Moses and the Law.

We live in different days - e.g. we wouldn't think it right to sacrifice animals in our churches or meeting rooms today but this was entirely appropriate for the people of God in the Old Testament. In Hebrews 13:15 we read, "*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*" David knew something of this when in Psalm 69:30-31 he says, "*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.*" You see, the animal sacrifices of the old economy (or dispensation) were in themselves without value. They only had value in the sight of God because they looked forward to the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary. His sacrifice being perfect, there is no value today in animal sacrifices but rather God the Father looks for worshippers in spirit and truth, to bring the worship of redeemed hearts and praises of redeemed lips.

I don't want to get distracted from our subject today but just let me list the dispensations of God's dealings with mankind as I see them. In the beginning Adam was set in **Innocence** in the Garden of Eden and God dealt with him on this basis until the Fall (Genesis 3:1-7). Having received a **Conscience**, knowing good from evil, God dealt with mankind on this basis from the time Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden (Genesis 3:24) until Noah and his family entered the ark and the Flood came. After the Flood, God gave Noah commandments (as we shall see in our study of Genesis 9) and man was tested under **Human Government**. After the judgement of God at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), God takes up one man, one family and one nation - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or Israel) on the basis of His **Promises**. Ending up in bondage in Egypt, God raises up Moses to deliver His people through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-31) and Joshua to lead them through the Jordan into Canaan (Joshua 3:1-17), '*the land of milk and honey*' see Exodus 3:8, but during that wilderness journey the people had put themselves under **Law** (the Ten Commandments, see Exodus 20:1-17). "*The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*", John 1:17.

Today is the day of **Grace** and God blesses mankind today on the basis of the death of Christ. There is nothing to be done (as under Law) but only to accept that everything has been done perfectly by Christ. Thus God's grace

(unmerited favour) can be our present enjoyment if we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. The saved on earth today look for the return of Christ at the Rapture (in fulfilment of the Lord's promise in John 14:3, "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself.*") Once the Church or assembly is in heaven, and after a period of tribulation on the earth, Christ will set up His **Kingdom** reign for 1,000 years, but even in the midst of such blessing man will ultimately fail when Satan is loosed for a short time (Revelation 20:7) and deceives the nations. The final judgement will take place as we read in Revelation 20:10-15 before God brings in the New Heaven and New Earth - **Eternity**; see Revelation 21:1-4.

Coming back to our subject today we find that the Flood being past, God blesses Noah and instructs him to "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Genesis 9:1). Only Noah and his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth) and their wives had been preserved through God's judgement. It is a fact that from these eight souls the whole population of the world has descended. God reaffirms with Noah his supremacy over the animal kingdom and for the first time says that man is to eat the flesh of the animals as part of his diet (Genesis 9:3). I know there are Christians who are vegetarian and don't eat meat, but this should never be for conscience sake. Noah was expressly told that he could eat meat (Genesis 9:3) and that instruction has never been rescinded.

We are absolutely clear today that we have no dietary restrictions in relation to the eating of meat, however, in Genesis 9:4 we have a clear instruction not to eat blood. Pagan folks eat and drink the blood of animals, but the people of God (in every dispensation) are instructed to refrain from eating blood, see Acts 15:29. Today 'Black Pudding' is very often on the menu, but as Christians, with this very clear instruction and knowing the significance of blood to God, we should happily refrain from eating it.

What follows in Genesis 9 is God's clear instruction for the self-government of man. It is here that we have the introduction of capital punishment as the ultimate sanction against any who take a life. God intended society to be based on this principle that, "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*" (Genesis 9:6). In our 'enlightened times' we have disregarded this commandment of God, but it is not for the betterment of society. I believe that this God given precept still applies today and those who are clearly responsible for any murder should have their lives taken from them. I know it sounds harsh but if capital punishment was still available to the courts of our land as the ultimate sanction for murder, then perhaps we would all live in a safer society where the heinous crimes we hear about too regularly would be greatly reduced.

God then repeats His word to Noah and his sons, "*Be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein*" (Genesis 9:7) and then goes on to establish a wonderful covenant (or promise) with them. Never again would the whole earth be flooded; never again would mankind be judged in this way and the animals destroyed (Genesis 9:8-11). As a sign to them, and a token of His promise to them, God set the rainbow in the cloud (Genesis 9:9-17). What a majestic sight this must have been for Noah and his family! We need to remember that before the flood, it had never rained. The earth was watered by the mist or dew. The first rain man experienced was the rain which brought God's all-consuming judgement in the flood. What a wonderful comfort the rainbow must have been to Noah and his family now that the world would experience rain and storms. They had God's promise and they could see the rainbow and remember what He had said. Many years ago, in Sunday school we used to sing:

*"Whenever you see a rainbow
Remember God is love!"*

Anon

Over 4,000 years have passed since the sight of the first rainbow and God has remained faithful to His promise! Perhaps in our experience it is the times when tears have filled our eyes that we have been able to look up to our Father in heaven and see His bow in the clouds and remember His love.

It is sad, but before we get to the end of the chapter we read of Noah's failure and Ham's sin (Genesis 9:18-28). How this should give us the confidence to believe these historical events as recorded 'warts and all' in the Scriptures. In a generation where the Bible is disregarded by many, we Christians need to hold on to the belief that it is the inspired and unerring Word of God.

Noah was a great man, "*a just man and perfect in his generations*" (Genesis 6:9), one who "*walked with God*" (Genesis 6:9) but there was failure too in his life. We should be encouraged by this as we read through the Scriptures and see that even the greatest servants of God had episodes of failure in their lives. As well as being encouraged we need to learn the lessons from these biblical characters, to avoid the pitfalls and the sorrow and pain which come as the result of sin in our lives. It is a fact that while God can and does forgive our sins, sometimes we are left to live with the consequences of those sins. We should never treat sin lightly!

Noah had become a farmer and he had planted a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). From the grapes he made wine and the Bible records that he was drunk and lay naked in his tent (Genesis 9:21). Although I don't believe the Bible teaches

that Christians must be 'teetotal', there are clear warnings about drunkenness. Proverbs 20:1 warns us, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*" Other Scriptures could be quoted, but I think the most important thing is to understand that we must always exercise self-control. In Galatians 5:23, among the other things listed as the fruit of the Spirit we have "*temperance*" or self-control. Noah lacked self-control. He drank wine, became drunk and lay naked in his tent. What a sad state to be in for a "*preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5) and one who "*walked with God*" (Genesis 6:9). Let this be a lesson to us!

Ham (Noah's youngest son) went into his father's tent, and saw the nakedness of his father, and told this two brothers outside (Genesis 9:22). Shem and Japheth then took a garment and covered their father, taking great care not to look upon his nakedness as they did so (Genesis 9:23).

When Noah sobered up he knew what Ham had done and immediately pronounced a curse, but interestingly the curse was on Ham's youngest son Canaan (Genesis 9:24). It would appear from the biblical record and some Bible expositors have suggested that Ham's actions spoke of his perversions and were more than just a glance at his naked father. Certainly the curse that Noah immediately puts on Canaan, Ham's youngest son, would cause us to think that it was much more severe than just seeing his father naked.

But why Canaan? The answer is that we don't know; the Bible doesn't say. Maybe Noah saw something in his son Ham and grandson Canaan which troubled him. Certainly the population of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were descendants of Canaan so this may give us a clue, but we cannot be certain. I take it that Canaan's descendants also occupied the land of Israel and the descendants of Shem (the nation of Israel) would eventually as promised by God, possess their land. God promised His ancient people (the Hebrews) that they would be established in His land, the land of milk and honey, the land of Canaan.

Genesis 10 gives us in great detail the descendants of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. I don't intend to say much on this chapter apart from the rather obvious; that we see the formation of all the nations of the world descending from the three sons of Noah. It is clear that the Hebrews came through Shem. The Lord Jesus Himself being a descendant of David was a descendant of Shem. The Persians, Assyrians and many of the Arabian tribes also came through Shem. From Ham descended the Egyptians, Africans, Babylonians, Philistines and the Canaanites. From Japheth descended the Greeks, Romans, Russians, Gauls, and Britons. For any who are interested, this is a worthwhile study.

However, I do want to speak a little about the events recorded in Genesis 11 (perhaps 100 years after the flood). Our series of talks have been looking at the accurate historical events as recorded in Genesis and without any doubt Genesis 11 answers a great question. When did the people of the world start speaking in different languages? Well here in Genesis 11 we get the answer.

To begin we read in Genesis 11:1 that, "*The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*" Noah and his sons were told to move out into the whole land, but we see that they had in fact settled in the land of Shinar (Genesis 11:2). They had the idea to build a city and a tower (reaching to heaven) because they feared being scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. This is sad and shows their disobedience and worse, defiance to God's commandment to them.

Genesis 10:8-12 tells of Nimrod who was a son of Cush who was a son of Ham. It appears that he was the leader in building the city and tower of Babel. These ancient civilisations were very skilful and in the absence of stone, they constructed brick to build. It must be understood that this tower was not purely a status symbol or a monument, it was with the view to man making a name for himself and therefore a challenge to God. This tower was an early example of a Ziggurat, most certainly used for the worship of the sun, moon or stars and probably some pagan deity. I think the fact that they wanted the top of the tower to reach unto heaven tells us that they had formed a society and religion which challenged God.

We talked earlier about the dispensations of God's dealings with man. God began a new dispensation with Noah and his family after the flood and here, less than 450 years later, it was to be brought to an end because of man's movement away from God. Babel means "confusion" and God stepped in, in judgement by confusing their languages and scattering the people "abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth", bringing an end to their building. So here we have the history behind the different languages found in the world today. What a demonstration of God's power to cause this to happen in a single day!

In Genesis 10 you will find 70 nations listed from the descendants of Noah and his family, 14 from Japheth, 30 from Ham and 26 from Shem. From Genesis 12 we are introduced to the great patriarch Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob (whose name would be changed by God to Israel). Here begins the great story of the people of God in the Old Testament (the Israelites) - the descendants of Shem.

We live in the dispensation of Grace, the Spirit's day. Perhaps we have time to recall what happened at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified. In Acts 2, we read that the Apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those who were at Jerusalem *"out of every nation under heaven"* (Acts 2:5). What a miracle! A complete reversal of what we have seen happened at Babel. Here we find at the very beginning of the Church age, men of Galilee preaching the glad tidings, not in 'tongues' which were unintelligible to people, but in 'known languages', so that all in Jerusalem at that time heard and understood what was being proclaimed, in their own language. How thankful we are that this resulted in the Gospel being spread across the world and we believe that since that day, the Lord has *"added to the church daily such as should be saved"* Acts 2:47.

This dispensation will again end with the judgement of God upon man, but we can be thankful that before this the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, will come again for all those who have been saved by faith in His blood.

How good it is to know that in our world which can at times appear to be out of control, God is still on the throne, and He will remember His own! No power in heaven or on earth will thwart His sovereign purpose being fulfilled.

May God bless you all.

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