

Genesis Chapters 9-11, Noah to Abram

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
Authorised King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

Before we commence our talk, I will just say that the Scriptures used in this talk will be from the Authorised King James Version (AKJV) unless otherwise stated. By way of introduction and background we will refer to the end of chapter 8 where Noah offers sacrifices, verses 20-21,

“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. And 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 everything living, as I have done” (Genesis 8:20-21).

We find in verse 21 that the sacrifices of Noah pleased the LORD. As a result the LORD comes to a decision that He would not curse the ground any more because of man's evil heart. This would refer to chapter 3:17-19 where the ground was cursed because Adam and his wife had disobeyed the Lord God in eating of the forbidden fruit in the garden. Also there will be no more universal flood to destroy every living thing on the earth. This is a beautiful promise and more relevant in our day when there is world-wide concern over global warming. So no matter how bad climate change becomes, that is the melting of all polar ice including ice from off various land masses causing ocean levels to rise, it will not result in the extinction of all life upon earth. The flood in Noah's day was a one-off judgement on the then habitable world. This is not to say there will not be localised flooding, which was not promised.

Next, in verse 22 there is a blessing when the LORD states,

“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).

In this simple sentence God is establishing the rules to govern the production of food, whether arable or animals, essential for humanity to live including every other living creature. This however does not prevent there being harsh localised climatic conditions.

Let us look at chapters 9-11 under the following headings.

1. Blessing, a command, and changes.
2. The Rainbow.
3. The dangers of alcohol.
4. One language.
5. God's judgment.

6. The ancestry of Abram.
7. Conclusion.

Blessing, a command, and changes, verses 1-7

As we look at chapter 9 it commences with God blessing Noah and his sons. Verse 1 states,

“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1).

Considering the devastation of the flood it is not surprising that God not only blesses Noah and his sons but gives them this command to re-populate the earth. Although we will find in chapter 10 that Noah does not have any more children, the carrying out of God’s command is left to his three sons and this we will see in chapter 10.

Verse 2 is the first of the changes that happen in this new world after the flood. All the creatures of creation will now fear people.

“And 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” (Genesis 9:2).

We can therefore draw the conclusion that prior to the flood creatures lived peaceably with mankind. You might say what about our animal pets. True most pets do not cause problems but increasingly in the news we hear of dogs attacking and sometimes killing people. This just bears out what is said in verse 2. Prior to this mankind were vegetarian as is indicated in Genesis 3,

“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:18-19).

After the flood this all changed as we find in chapter 9:3,

“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.”

However, there was one restriction as stated in verses 4-6, the blood was not to be eaten. Once animals became food for people the blood was not included and this restriction holds true as far as God is concerned right down to our day. The life of animals and mankind was in the blood and the blood was for God. We see this very clearly in the sacrifices mentioned in Leviticus where the blood was poured out by the bronze altar. Similarly on a more serious note that if a person was killed by an animal or another person then their lives would be forfeited. In the UK and many other countries in the world, capital punishment has been abolished. This, under the guise of being humane has nullified the word of God but at some point God will require a reckoning for such disobedience. Some may think this is harsh but God’s righteousness is the measure not mankind’s thoughts. We must remember that people are created in the image of God, spirit, soul and body.

The next major communication from God, is that Noah and his family are to be fruitful and replenish the earth. Looking at the earlier chapters of Genesis, prior to the flood, we find that the people mentioned gave birth to sons and daughters. It is the same after the flood as we read in verse 7 of our chapter.

“And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein” (Genesis 9:7).

The Rainbow

Let us read the verses about God’s covenant which was sealed by a multi-colour bow in the sky.

“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, and I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and 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. And 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. 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 cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and 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. And 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. And 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” (Genesis 9:8-17).

The first thing that we become aware of, is the number of verses, ten in all, that is devoted to the bow in the clouds or the rainbow as we know it. It is God’s covenant that the world will not be flooded again to destroy all life, mankind and animals. There may well be heavy rain and major flooding in many countries around the world but there will not be a global catastrophe even though scientists are predicting rising sea levels which may have a devastating impact on low lying countries. Finally, in verses 18-19 we are reminded again about Noah and his sons including a grandson Canaan, and that it is from these that the world is repopulated.

The dangers of alcohol

Let us consider the last verses of chapter 9:20-29,

“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died” (Genesis 9:20-29).

The last thing to highlight is that Noah became a farmer and as part of that occupation he planted a vineyard. From the fruit of the vineyard he produced wine. Sadly, overindulgence resulted in drunkenness, and he lay down in his tent naked. Why Noah should do this we are not told. It is possible that he wanted to try and forget the flood and all the destruction that had happened. Although his immediate family had been saved, he would no doubt know many who were closely related, and they had perished not believing Noah's warnings.

Hebrews 11:7 states,

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

This verse reminds us that Noah was a faithful man and obeyed God and that he was counted righteous. However, the natural man in Noah may have been saddened by all the loss of life due to the flood. We too may well be saddened when we see our own relatives unresponsive to God's grace even though some may be religious. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to gain blessing and sins forgiven. This may seem harsh, as people when thinking about God consider Him as loving, but God is also holy and righteous who will punish unrepentant sinners.

Going back to drunken Noah. He is lying in his tent drunk and naked. Ham sees this and tells his two brothers who then take a garment and with it over their shoulders walk backward into the tent to cover their father. When Noah awakes, he blames Ham's younger son, Canaan, and places a curse on him that he will be a servant to his brethren. We need to go to 1 Chronicles 1:8 to find that Canaan is the younger son of Ham, grandson to Noah. We also need to look at the Hebrew word for son in this chapter to find it can also mean grandson. Now the scripture is clearer why Noah blames Canaan. It is possible that Canaan told his father Ham who goes into Noah's tent. Also, there is the possibility that there was something about the character of Canaan which made Noah blame his grandson. Finally, the last two verses of the chapter provide the detail of Noah's long life. Six hundred years before the flood and three hundred and fifty years from the flood. His long life is consistent with all those who lived before the flood. However, after the flood the years that people lived gradually reduced.

Chapter 10 provides the generations of Noah and his family to at least his grandchildren. The first thing to notice is that the names of many of the children also became the names of nations or places which are found in the Old Testament. In this chapter we also learn that the descendants, children, and grandchildren, became so numerous that they became nations with their own language. We will pass over this chapter as there is not sufficient time to go into all the detail but is worthy of study by listeners at their leisure, we will now move on to chapter 11.

One language

We will read the first four verses of this chapter.

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:1-4).

Chapter 11 gives more detail regarding the activities of the people in chapter 10. I mentioned earlier that people groups had their own languages, see chapter 10 verses 5, 20 and 31. Initially the whole of humanity had one language, and everyone could understand each other. After the flood, the people all stayed together and moved about as one large group. There was a restlessness among the people, and we are told they journeyed from the east and came to a place called Shinar. There also seemed to be a fear of being scattered one from another so they decided to build a city and a tower. Chapter 10:8-10 speaks of Nimrod a mighty hunter. He was a grandson of Ham, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and other cities that he built. He was not alone in the construction of the city, but all the people became involved in the construction of a tower to reach up to the heavens. They obviously envisaged a massive construction, and the purpose was to keep themselves together.

Now this was contrary to God's instructions when Noah and his family left the ark. Going back to chapter 9:1 where they were told to replenish the earth. Disobedience has consequences as we find in the next verses of chapter 11. This construction, as well as being disobedient to God, appeared to leave God out of their reckoning. Whereas, Noah, upon leaving the ark, built an altar and made multiple sacrifices to the LORD see chapter 8:20-21.

God's judgment

Let us read chapter 11:5-9,

“And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

God saw that the people, as well as being disobedient to His command as they were all together and of one language, they could pool their resources and use their combined intellect so that no project would be too great. Whatever they desired to do would succeed. God's judgment is to confound their language so that they will not be able to understand each other. As a result the people drifted apart and went to separate parts of the world. The construction of the city of Babel stopped. The city was well named as Babel means confusion. Many years ago there was a reviving of interest in an artificial language called 'Esperanto', devised by Dr Zamenhof, and published in 1887. His intention was that if everyone spoke the same language it would prevent wars. However when the 1st World War commenced it was abandoned. Renewed interest in the language did not last for long. It had little chance of succeeding as it was contrary to God's judgment at Babel when the earth's people were scattered because they could not understand each other.

The ancestry of Abram

From chapter 11:10 to the end of the chapter is a selected genealogy which takes us to Abram. This genealogy is different from the previous in chapter 10 as we are given the number of years each person lived. We will notice that the number of years lived gradually decreases with each following generation. Let us now consider verses 10 to 32.

“These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood: and Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah: and Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah four hundred and three years, and

begat sons and daughters. And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber: and Salah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: and Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: and Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters. And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug: and Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor: and Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: and Nahor lived after he begat Terah a hundred and nineteen years, and he begat sons and daughters. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran" (Genesis 11:10-32).

As mentioned earlier the length of time that each generation lived gradually decreased. However, our focus is now on the latter part of this genealogy where we find the three children born to Terah. These are Abram, Nahor and Haran. It is the descendants of these three who play major roles, but all connected with Abram. In these verses we are told that Terah took his family from Ur of the Chaldees and went and settled in the land of Haran. The Scriptures tell us that Terah's son Haran died in Ur of the Chaldees after his son Lot was born. The intention was to continue into Canaan, but Terah decided to settle down in Haran. We are not told the reason, but the beginning of the next chapter clarifies that the call of the LORD was to Abram and not Terah. So it was not in the purposes of the LORD to have Terah in Canaan. Abram, and later called Abraham, was to be the father of a people who would eventually be known as the people of Israel, but that was many years later.

Conclusion

In summary we have in chapter 9 Noah and his family, the changes on earth after the flood, God setting a rainbow in the sky as a reminder that the entire world will not suffer a global flood again and the dangers of drink. Chapter 10 gives the genealogy of Noah's family. Finally, chapter 11 considers the destruction of Babel, confounding the single language into many different tongues and then the detailed genealogy of the family of Shem down to Abram leaving Ur of the Chaldees.

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