



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes – 5th June 2022

Origins: Genesis 8-9 Covenant: God's promise to us

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

Genesis 8: 11-17, 9:1-16

¹¹ When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. ¹² He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷ Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it." ~

⁹ Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. ² The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. ³ Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. ⁴ "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. ⁶ "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. ⁷ As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

¹² 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: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth".

Comment

The theme of covenant and commitment is a really important thread running throughout the Bible and the first formal covenant in the Bible was God's covenant with Noah in Genesis chapter 9. This was the original starting agreement with humanity following the catastrophe of the flood and the reboot of creation. Noah's ark protecting his family and all the animals is a picture of God's plan of salvation and the redemption of the righteous. Christian baptism picks up on the imagery of going down into the water as dying to our old sinful way of life, but then rising back up, surviving the flood, kept safe by the ark that is faith in Jesus Christ. Whatever catastrophe affects nations or the planet, God is always committed to preserving a faithful remnant who will carry his image and his message forward for future generations.

The Bible project describes covenants as 'The backbone of the Bible because they act as the skeleton upon which the entire redemptive story is built.' A covenant is an agreement based on relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other and work together to reach a common goal. They're often accompanied by oaths, signs, and ceremonies. Marriage is a probably the covenant we are most familiar with. There is the promise to be faithful to one another, the commitment to give and share resources, and the sign of the covenant which is the union of sexual intimacy.

There are many examples in the Bible but there are 5 key covenants between God and his people that are vital to understand if we are to understand God's redemptive plan for humanity.

They are the covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abraham, the covenant with Moses, the covenant with David and the new covenant that Jesus established.

1. Through his promises to Noah, God reset and renewed his blessing on the whole of creation. God promised to preserve humanity and provide food for the population. However it is also the original framework for justice, care for the planet and the restraint of human evil and violence.
2. Abraham's covenant promised him abundant descendants and a promised land from which in turn all people everywhere would be blessed.
3. Moses' covenant set out the law, the religious character and the priorities of the nation of Israel.
4. David's covenant was all about godly leadership and the promise of an everlasting kingdom.
5. Then finally the covenant established by Jesus fulfilled ancient prophecies of a coming day when God would make a new covenant unlike the previous ones Israel had broken. Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God, offered forgiveness of sin, internal renewal of the heart, and a personal relationship with God empowered by the Holy Spirit. On the night of Jesus's Last Supper, Jesus broke the bread and shared the cup, declaring that his death would be the inauguration of this new covenant.

Every key covenant in the Bible involves a sacrifice, an oath, a blessing and a sign. Once Noah had made a sacrifice to God, God blessed him and his family and promised to sustain life on earth in future. The rainbow is the sign of that covenant – a visual reminder to be thankful for every time we see it. It is worth noting that from this point humanity was set firmly at the top of the food chain, yet in the context of God promising to sustain and bless the whole of creation through good stewardship. The Covenant with Noah was also the first covenant of Grace. God promised to bless Noah and his descendants despite knowing that a chapter later Noah's drunken thoughtless behaviour would cause division in his family that would ripple down the generations. Jesus' covenant was the ultimate covenant of grace in that 'while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' When we see a rainbow in the sky, or whenever we share in Holy Communion we remember that God is faithful and keeps his promises.

Questions

1. Can you think of any modern day examples of covenants and how they work?
2. Why do you think covenants are such an important theme in the Bible?
3. Why is Noah's covenant called the original covenant of grace?
4. God blessed the whole of creation, but said that animals and creatures would be afraid of humanity as human beings would be top of the food chain. How is this state different from the original plan in Eden? Noah didn't preserve all the animals simply to thoughtlessly exploit them. What do these verses teach us about careful management of the environment and other living things?
5. What do you think of when you see a rainbow? How can we give thanks for each new day?