

The Great Flood (Part 7)

The Post-Flood Covenant

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Just like my previous sermons, I would like to continue with the background information found in Genesis 6, and look at a theme that seems significant to me and needs a bit more explanation.

Genesis 6:6 And the LOORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

This needs explanation because many of us still use the King James Version.

Genesis 6:6 (King James Version) And it repented the LOORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

It is necessary to understand what this means—what the original intent is for us. This phrase, "It repented the Lord," occurs in other places in the Bible. The King James Version in these other verses also say that God repented.

Of course, the reason why this would raise a question is because in other places, the Bible says that God does not repent. So, it seems we have a contradiction here.

Numbers 23:19 [Balaam is speaking] "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Now, this is how we all think of God. If a word goes out of His mouth, it does not return to Him empty. He is not going to change His mind. He is going to continue doing what He has said He is going to do. It also says basically the same thing in I Samuel 15:29, that God is not like a man who needs to repent.

There are other places where Genesis 6:6 seems to be contradicted, such as Malachi 3:6.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LOORD, I do not change; therefore you are not

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consumed, O sons of Jacob."

So, God is talking about the fact that He has made a covenant, and He has made promises, and if He would be a changeable God, then He would have wiped them off the map. He would have consumed them because they had not fulfilled their portion of the covenant.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He was that same God who Malachi quotes in Malachi 3:6.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

There is no variation at all! There is not even a shadow of turning.

What I have done is set up an alleged discrepancy. But, we need to understand that this trait of God—the immutability of God—is one of His character traits that lies at the foundation—the very basis—of our faith.

Think of this in very simple terms: How could we trust a God who changed even a little bit? We could not. We could never know if this is one of those little changes or not. We would never know if this was one of those once in a while things. If He said one thing in one part of the Bible, and contradicted Himself in another part, then could we trust the Bible? No, we could not! In order for us to have true faith, God must be immutable and unchangeable.

So in understanding all this, we have to conclude that Genesis 6:6 in the King James Version is not correct as the Church of God understands repentance. God did not repent.

"Repent" is an old word that does not mean today what it did in 1611. So, in many ways, this alleged discrepancy is a product of the King James Version. And you can understand this dilemma because most people, up until just a few years ago, used the King James Version. And the King James Version, though revised in the 19th century, was not changed all that much. Most people did not use that revised version, but rather

kept their 1611 Bible. That is even true among many today.

One reason is that the word itself has changed meaning. This is the case with many words. There is even a book that is specifically written to help you understand the changes of meanings of English words between 1611 and today. Languages evolve. I suppose that in many respects the language of Shakespeare and King James is closer to the Middle English, than we are to Shakespeare and King James. This was a long time ago—four full centuries now. And then, we are also talking about transplanting the English language to North America and all the things that we have done to the language too. Some words do not mean the same thing in both places anymore.

For instance, a boot here in the United States is something to put on your foot, while in England, it is that too, but it is also the trunk of your car. You have to know what you are talking about. This is a common example, but it is an example of the difference. These things happen over time. Language evolves and changes a bit over time.

The other reason why we have come to understand this a little better is because the modern translations use different or better words because the scholarship on ancient Hebrew has improved, and they have learned a great deal over the past four centuries. That is mostly because of the discoveries made in libraries and archeology digs of ancient Hebrew. Think about the Dead Sea Scrolls and all the other Hebrew and Aramaic documents and fragments of documents that have been found. They are able to compare the usages of various words in various documents with how it is used in the Bible. They are able to discern with better understanding the meanings for some of these Hebrew words.

They might know that generally a word means "whatever" in its broadest application because of how it is used in the Bible—but maybe it is only used once or twice. And so, the context only gives them so much information to understand what that particular word means. However, if they dig up other documents, which are not necessarily biblical, and see how it was used commonly, they can maybe get a better understanding of how it is supposed to mean in the Bible. And that is what has happened over the last four centuries.

So, as good as the translators were for the King James Version considering what they had to use at that time, the version they made has unwittingly misled a lot of sincere people simply because of these factors—change in the language because of the changes in the meanings of words. Now there should be a better understanding because of these discoveries.

As I mentioned, most of the modern translations clear up this matter of "repent" in Genesis 6:6 by using a more nuanced term—something that is closer to what was meant in the first place than the blanket term, "repent."

Just a note—I want to say that I do not want you to believe that from what I have just said about ancient Hebrew and older English that the King James Version is a bad translation. That is not what I said at all. What I said is that the King James Version is old, and the language has moved on since 1611. So, it is an excellent translation, but you will have to read it with more understanding and knowledge of the older English. You have to read it with the idea in mind that these words have changed meanings.

For instance, "conversation," used in the sermonette today, would be another example. It does not mean conversation like we use it today. It meant conduct—the way that one conducts himself, and it has to do with the whole manner and demeanor and everything of one's life. But today it has come to mean simply a dialog between people. And that is not the meaning in that context that God wanted us to have. So now, with that little caveat, I will go on.

Having said all that, I want to stress that the Hebrew word in Genesis 6:6, "repent" in the King James Version, and "sorry" in the New King James Version, does contain the idea of change. In Hebrew this word sounds like, "na(kh)amb." It is the same word we get the prophet's name from, "Nahum" (except they pronounced it properly, we do not).

It does contain an idea of change. That is why the King James translators used the word "repent." It is there. It underlies this word. And it is used in other contexts of humans repenting. But most often, this word is used in the context of God changing, which is very interesting.

Now when men repent, normally the Hebrew word used sounds like "shub." This is the word for men changing and repenting. And the word "shub" means to turn, implying turning from sin toward God, which is how we have always understood repentance in the theological sense from the New Testament. It is turning around, and going the other way. It is changing the way that we were going, and going on another path. That is "shub."

But this word in Genesis 6:6, "nahamb," originally described the action of a person of sighing heavily. The person could sigh heavily in sorrow, or conversely sighing heavily in taking comfort or consolation in something. Sometimes, when you sigh, you feel a little bit better. And so, it means either the sigh of grief, or the sigh of consolation, depending upon the situation. So, the word's meaning suggests a change due to grief,

or relief.

Do you not give a sigh of relief when something did not turn out like you feared it might? As a matter of fact, the prophet Nahum's name most often is shown as "comfort," or "consolation," rather than "grief." However, he sure did give the Assyrians grief in the prophesies he had from God! And it was a relief for Israel because they were looking for a bit of justice because of what the Assyrians did to them (up to that point). So there are both sides there. We will see a bit more of that when we get to the book of Jonah.

Getting back to Genesis 6:6, God was deeply grieved to the point of a massive sigh over the utter corruption of mankind. That is the context. He had just said that every thought of mankind was only evil continually. And so God was grieved—like He gave this great big sigh of grief and sorrow that it had come to this point.

It says there God was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth. And this is not quite right. He had not created them to come to this wretched state. He had made them very good. That is what it says in Genesis 1:31. He saw all His creation, mankind included, and it was very good. But He became sorry that mankind had come down to this point.

Keil and Delisch writes: "The repentance of God is an anthropomorphic expression for the pain of the divine love regarding the sin of man, and signifies that, (quoting Calvin) 'God is hurt no less by the atrocious sins of men, than if they had pierced His heart with mortal anguish.'"

So, Genesis 6:6 is showing that God was very grieved, that if He had been a man, He would have been heartbroken. And that is why Keil used the term anthropomorphic. Moses and Noah are putting upon God a human-like reaction, because that is the only way that we can understand things. We cannot even describe the depths of utter grief that God felt because His creation of mankind had gone so badly so far. It was not His fault, He had made them very good, and He had provided everything for them, but they, by their own volition, had come to total corruption and depravity. And this really hurt God deeply. So, this is the type of sorrow that we are talking about.

Now, another interesting factor in all this, which also appears in Genesis 6:6, is that "nahamb" describes a response to a change in circumstances. And again, this can be either good or bad. Now, what is interesting here is the idea of response—that this "nahamb" is not something that happens on its own. It is triggered by something else. It is a response.

A commentator named Johan Peter Lang writes, "God in consistency with His immutability assumes a changed position in respect to a changed mankind."

So, God changes His outlook, or His way of dealing with something as a result of, or in a response to how mankind had turned out. This did not change His purpose or His character. He just changed His means. He decided to go in a different direction. Maybe a better way to describe this is "a shift of course." And His shift of course was due to the choices of other free moral agents. He gave mankind the ability of choosing their way, and they chose the wrong one—total depravity. And so, because of all that, God responded in grief with the pronouncement of judgment.

It is almost as if God is saying, "Mankind, you have driven Me to this! I didn't want to go this way, and I tried to avoid going this way, but because you have done what you have done, just evil continually, I have to act. I have to act now, and I have to act drastically," which grieved Him very much.

So, God decided to take a drastic step, which was to annihilate mankind, which would affect so much of the animal life too, and to also reshape the earth once again. By starting over, He could cripple the advance of evil. Things progressed way too fast. He knew that there would come a point where man would be totally corrupt and evil, but it happened far faster—1650 years is all—and He had a plan that stretched out for about 6000 years. He had to put the breaks on this, and stop it drastically. And so He did.

Now, a much happier instance of "nahamb" occurs in Jonah 3, in that it had a better outcome, though not necessarily for Jonah.

Jonah 3:4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

This was Jonah's message.

Jonah 3:5-8 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way

[repentance] and from the violence that is in his hands."

Is this not interesting? This is very similar type of thing that was happening before the Flood. Everybody was going toward evil, and there was violence in the city.

Jonah 3:9-10 Who can tell if God will turn and relent [nahamb], and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and [in response] God relented [nahamb] from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

So, a word had gone out from His mouth, through Jonah, that He was going to destroy Nineveh within 40 days. And notice within the record that we have here, it does not say "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown unless you repent." It simply said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But, they chose, as they are allowed to do under free choice. They chose the right way; they chose to turn from their evil way, and to repent, and seek God—crying out to Him to spare them. And God heard it, and with a great sigh of relief, He said, "Okay, I will spare Nineveh."

God says in chapter 4, verse 11, when Jonah got all upset at God for not destroying Nineveh like He said He would.

Jonah 4:11 "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

He was going to wipe the Ninevites, and all their goods, and all their livestock, and everything off the face of the earth. There were 120,000 children in that city, not counting all their parents, and older siblings (who could discern their right and left hand). And God was glad that He did not have to do that. He was trying to teach Jonah that he should be happy also—that this great punishment did not have to come to pass—that God would take pity and have compassion on these people.

Jonah thought that God was committing a great miscarriage of justice because these people of Nineveh who were going around throwing their weight all over the Middle East. They were killing and torturing people, because the Assyrians were known for being very harsh and cruel to their subject people. Jonah knew that Israel was on

Assyria's agenda, and so He wanted God to wipe them out. Nineveh was their capital city. If God would wipe out Nineveh, Israel would be spared.

But what did God do? God listened to the cry of these heathen Assyrians, and spared them. And Jonah just could not take it. He went off in a huff and was angry with God. He was all depressed, having more pity for a stupid gourd that died than he did for all the people, children, and livestock of Nineveh. He needed to understand a little more about nahamb in terms of God. God was not changing His purpose, God was not changing His character. As a matter of fact, what happened here only magnified God's character trait of compassion. He would much rather be known as a God of compassion than a God of justice, although He is both. But, He would really like for everyone to know that He is a God that will love you, and be kind to you.

By withholding His hand from Nineveh, He had actually made a great witness of His character to all involved—to them, and to Israel, and to Jonah. But, Jonah, being a hard-headed Israelite, did not want to learn that lesson. He wanted, "Kill the Assyrians! Yeah! Get rid of our enemies!"

So, that was a very good example of "nahamb."

There was another time back in Exodus 32, in the Golden Calf debacle.

Exodus 32:9-10 And the LOORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

Moses intercedes, asking God to remember, "You made this great witness to the Egyptians, but if you kill your people out in the wilderness like this, they will think wrongly of you. Have all you done was to bring your people out in order to kill them in the wilderness?" And then, Moses also said, "Remember your covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!"

God could still have done it through Moses, but there were a lot of details in there that might not be quite right. You've made promises, such as they will be like the stars of heaven, and if you take them down to one pair again, it will take you a long time to get Israel into a great people again."

Exodus 32:14 So the LOORD relented [nahamb] from the harm which He said

He would do to His people.

This example is just slightly different in that the response God made was a response to Moses' plea. That is the difference from the other example—that Moses, as the leader of Israel, convinced God not to take the drastic route, and shift to a more merciful route.

Now, I should mention that this is only initially more merciful, because for all that Israel did, they ended up all dead in the wilderness—those who left Egypt. Only their children entered the Promised Land.

So, God, in a way, got His way, but having it spread out over forty years rather than an immediate boom-poof-splat. They were all gone except for Moses, Caleb, and Joshua. So, this is another example of "nahamb."

In a way, you could say that this incident in Exodus 32 is the reverse of the adjustment that happened in Genesis 6. You see, God had forbore with the evil of men before the Great Flood, but then He shifted to sending judgment.

So "nahamb," there in Genesis 6, was from forbearance to judgment, whereas in Exodus 32, it is the other way around. He had reacted in wrath to justly slay them all, but He had changed and relented, and He decided to show them mercy. It can go from either good toward ill, or ill toward good.

The bottom line on all of this, this whole thing about God's relenting, "nahamb," is that the New King James Version has it fairly correct. God had sorrow or grief over the corrupt state of man, but He was not sorry for having created mankind. He was sorry that his creation had gone badly, thus far. He was sorry that His making of mankind had come to this dreadful point. He was so sorry that if He were a man, He would be thoroughly grief stricken. In order to save mankind ultimately, His only recourse was to destroy them, and to start afresh. That was the change, that He decided no longer to forbear, but to judge.

It was my intention to cover the entire covenant found at the end of chapter 8, and then to continue into chapter 9 all the way to verse 17—but, as I was going through here, I found there was a lot more to this covenant that needs to be covered. So, we will get a good start today, but it will end up leaving us with at least one more sermon on the Great Flood.

To recap: Last time, we covered the bulk of Genesis 8. We started at about verse 3 or 4

and went on down through about verse 19. What we saw throughout this whole section was that the waters of the Flood steadily decreased; the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on the first day that the waters began to decrease, which was the 150th day that the waters covered the earth. Noah from that point on, after a certain amount of time, began sending out birds every seven days—the raven first (that never came back), and the dove after that at seven-day intervals. Ultimately throughout all of this, Noah waited 220 days while the waters receded, remaining in the ark until God called him out of it personally. God then told him to leave the ark.

So, what we found was that Noah was an amazingly patient man, and also very faithful, and very obedient. He was a wonderful example of what to do, and how to react in a situation like this where the world is under God's judgment, and He has provided a place of safety. So, what do you do? You follow Noah's example. You wait on God. You do what God says, and you do not do anything that God says not to do. Just wait for Him to give you the instructions you need.

It is no wonder that Noah is considered one of the three most righteous men of the Old Testament found in Ezekiel 14:14—Noah, Daniel, and Job, who up until this point were considered the most righteous men who ever lived. It is most interesting that all three of those men suffered a great deal. They all lived a long time too. I do not know if there is a correlation between suffering and long life.

Please turn to Genesis 8. Verses 18 and 19 are where they had come out of the ark, and all the animals with them.

Genesis 8:20 Then, Noah built an altar to the LOORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The abrupt use of the word "then" in the New King James Version suggests that Noah made this sacrifice immediately upon leaving the ark; that after shoing all the animals out of the ark, he built the altar and sacrificed, with nothing happening in between. He wanted his first action upon getting out of the ark to be thanksgiving to God. He did not seem to waste any time in showing God his gratitude for what God had done through this whole thing.

I mean, it is not just the fact that he brought them safely through, but that He had given them all the instructions they needed; that He had brought all the animals to him; that He had given a great deal of time to do all of this and get ready; and that He had saved them, and been with them throughout the Flood. He kept them from all the terrible

waves and such pushing at them from all sides, and then He had preserved them throughout the time of the water's receding—just thousands of things I am sure that Noah and his family could have thanked Him for. So it was not just the fact that they were alive, but there were so many other small details that they could give thanks for.

I should also mention that this is the first mention of an altar in the Bible. You would probably think there was an altar outside of the Garden of Eden, where Abel offered his offering, but there is no mention of one in Genesis 4. It is just assumed at this point.

The Jews have a tradition that the altar spoken about here in Genesis 8 stood on the same spot as Abel's altar, and later, Abraham's altar. But, we have come to understand that this is not the case. We know this one—Noah's altar—was probably on or near Mt. Ararat. And, we have come to learn that the most likely spot for Abel's and Abraham's altar was in or near Jerusalem—Mount Moriah, the location of Abraham's altar, where God has always been. That is where His place seems to have always been. So then, that Jewish tradition is most likely not true.

Now, I want to note that it says that Noah took of every clean animal, and every clean bird, and offered one as a burnt offering. So, this was not just your goat, or sheep, or bullock, or turtle dove. This could have also included deer, and antelope; and any or all of your songbirds, and poultry he kept back for this purpose, that Noah sacrificed one of each kind of those. Remember he brought at least seven of each clean animal into the ark. So that meant that once he got off the ark, he decided to give to God one-seventh of every clean animal and bird on earth to God. Who knows how many burnt offerings this added up to be! It was probably quite a few! It could have been dozens, depending upon the actual number of clean kinds that there are. It is hard to know.

He might have been offering this offering from morning to night because of all the different animals that he had to kill and then place on this altar. So, this was a rare, and under the circumstances, a very rich offering to God. Noah had only six animals left of all the clean sorts—this was better than the two of the unclean sorts, but for man's food production, early on, each one of those seven animals was very, very expensive in regards to the entire lack of population at this new beginning. With only seven of them, to give one of them to God was a kingly gift. And Noah gave one of every clean animal and bird. So, one-seventh of the world's entire complement of clean creatures was sacrificed to God.

Now notice also, it says that Noah built an altar to the Lord. Remember, I mentioned in previous sermons the distinctions between whether it is the Lord, or God being spoken about—Elohim, or YHVH. Here, to the Lord is YHVH, not Elohim. Elohim is the Almighty

Creator and Judge, being specific. Whereas, YHVH is the Covenant God. He was the personal God. He was the One who made the agreement. And, in His loving kindness He had brought them safely through the cataclysm of The Great Flood.

So, in other words, this was in part a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Noah's personal Lord and Master, if you want to put it that way in Christian terms. Another way to say this would be that this was a sacrifice to the God whom he (Noah) knew; the God with whom he had a relationship; the God who spoke to him; not the more distant God who made all things.

You know, we can think of God as the great watchmaker and creator who is the overlord over everything, but because He is so busy being the overlord of everything, He is too busy for little old us. But the idea of YHVH makes it a lot closer—He is the God who is near, not the God who is far. In fact, I want to go to some scriptures here.

Jeremiah 23:23 "Am I a God near at hand," says the LOORD, "And not a God afar off?"

The answer, of course, is yes. It is a rhetorical question. He is a God who is near. He said to Israel in another place, that the word is not far off, it is not over the sea, but it is in your very mouth, in your heart. It is right close. It is there.

Psalms 145:18-19 The LOORD [notice it is YHVH] is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.

It sounds like it could have just as easily been Noah who wrote those words.

I know you will like this next one, and we sang this psalm in Fort Mill today.

Psalms 46:1-5 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

This is the kind of God that Noah was thinking of when made the offering back in Genesis 8:20. He was giving it to the God who was near—the God whom he knew. He had come to understand that the Lord is a God near at hand, and intimately involved in our lives—the saving of our souls, you might say.

And so, Moses draws attention to this by using the term YHVH in this narrative with Noah. We have the personal God, the covenant God, the God who is known by the people who worshipped Him.

Notice also in verse 20 at the end of the verse that it says that Noah offered thank offerings—wrong! No, it says he offered burnt offerings. We will not go to Leviticus 1 today, but Leviticus 1 is where God describes the rules and regulations on how the burnt offering is to be given.

This tells us that this sacrifice of Noah actually has less to do with thanksgiving than it does with signifying Noah's total devotion to God. The burnt offering as shown in Leviticus 1:4 most specifically is to make atonement for the offerer, not necessarily to forgive his sins. There was no leavening involved alongside the burnt offering. So, there is no blatant idea of sin in there. The idea of the burnt offering was to show a man completely reconciled to God. And he was so reconciled, and so at-one with God that he was offering himself in full for God's use. That is why the burnt offering was totally consumed by the flames of the altar. It was put on whole and burned up. There was nothing left for the offerer to eat, like the thank offering had. The thank offering offered a portion to God, and He let a portion go to the priest, and He left the remainder for you and your family, and then you could eat a common meal. But, that was not what was done here. What was done here was a burnt offering, offering total devotion to God—absolute total giving of his life to Him. And the animals, of course, represented the man, in this case not only Noah, but his whole family. In a sense, what they were saying was that they got off the boat, and saw the terrible devastation the earth endured, and they saw what they had to do. The first thing they had to do was, "Look God, we're all Yours now. Do with us what you will, because we're the only ones left. We are totally in your hands."

I am sure there was an element of thanks in there, because you just cannot divorce that from their feelings. I am sure they were very thankful. We probably have not experienced gratitude like this ourselves. But, really the point of the offering was, "We are yours, God, let us be your servants."

Genesis 8:21-22 And the LOORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LOORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake,

although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

God is very pleased with Noah's offering. Why is this? Obviously giving a burnt offering was one of the reasons. But, let us think about this in terms of its contrast to what happened in Eden. Not what happened between Cain and Abel, but rather with Adam and Eve.

Think about it. The first man, with his wife, sinned. And what was the result? It brought separation between man and God. So, God had to kick them out of Eden, and put a sword there to keep them out, saying, "You cannot come near God! You are sinful." And so, there was a great gulf between men and God.

On Ararat though, with Noah and his wife and family, in contrast, they do not sin, but they give themselves in full devotion to God. "This," God says, "is the way that it should start!" No wonder He was pleased! No wonder He smelled a soothing aroma, because by the use of the word "soothing," it shows that God's wrath against humanity was now calmed (for a while). He had succeeded by bringing out of the Flood a righteous group, and He was starting with the best seed, if you will, for a new civilization—one that would follow Him. At least with Noah and his righteousness, and his total devotion to God, humanity now had a chance to do something better than just descend into depravity, and perversity, and violence.

So, instead of being like Adam and Eve, deceived and rebellious, Noah and his family were humble, and thankful, and at-one with God—well at least right here, at the start. So, it signifies a much better, more righteous beginning to this new chapter in human history. It portends in a small way that with Noah in charge, man would have a better chance, overall, not to descend quite so quickly into wickedness.

Unfortunately, things did not turn out that way, but it did start out properly. We can assume from this because of Noah's family's intimacy with God, that God would have a little bit more contact with man from this point on. I get the sense that before the Flood, God had very little contact with mankind. Remember I said, that the only ones mentioned were Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Seth. There were a very few who called upon the name of the Lord, but there were not very many. But after the Great Flood, going through Shem's family, He began to have a bit more contact with man after the flood than He apparently had before. It finally gets to the point where He calls a nation

through Abraham. By the time you get to 4000 years, you have Jesus Christ coming. Then He calls another nation who He has intimate contact with—His church; the church of God.

So as we go through history, we find God having more and more contact with mankind. And it is leading toward something great, which we know is the Kingdom of God. When Jesus Christ returns, He will be here on this earth among all mankind!

So, we see God slowly coming back into contact with man.

Now, on to God's promise, here, in Genesis 8:21 about not cursing the ground. It does not lift the curse that He made upon the ground with Adam, but rather He does not add to it. That is the basic thrust of the phrase, "never again curse." It would probably be better translated as, "not add to the curse." See? He is leaving it in place, the curse on the ground still exists, and that will not be wiped away until probably the Millennium. But, right now, God said He will not add to it, even though because of man's sins He could very justly have added another curse. However, He decided not to. Noah's soothing aroma was partly responsible for that, I am sure.

The Great Flood itself had been a great curse to the earth, but because of Noah's devotion, God would not make matters worse. Even though He says here that the stubborn rebelliousness and evilness of man's heart remains. God was going to leave those things as they were. This has some relationship to the events and topics of chapter 9, that He is leaving things as they were. Keep that in mind.

God also promises here that He will not destroy all life as He had through the Great Flood. Of course, we know that there is another time coming in which He will destroy the earth with fire. That is one of Peter's epistles.

But, at least we will not have to worry about another worldwide cataclysm of a Great Flood again. And, it says here He makes a promise based on the earth itself. He said that as long as the earth remains and goes through all its processes, He will be bound to this promise. So, like it says here, through seed time and harvest, cold and heat, these processes, spring and summer, day and night, as long as they go on, He will keep this promise. This basically means forever. We do not need to worry about that.

Genesis 9:1-7 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your

hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it."

Now, I read these seven verses because they form one complete passage. It contains both blessings and instructions.

1. God re-pronounces His command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

This is almost the same exact wording that He gave to Adam and Eve after their creation. So, we get the idea that He is starting anew here. The pronouncement He gives is the same one He gave to Adam. Remember what I said earlier about this. He is starting things over again, in that He is setting things up the same way again. He is leaving in verse 21 the curse, but not adding to it. This same idea goes through this whole section—that this is a reiteration of things, not new—it is a reiteration.

So, since Noah was another kind of Adam, he was given similar instructions, first of all to repopulate the earth. And this command is repeated again in verse 7. It was something that needed to be done, so He repeated it. He gave them their marching orders.

2. God gives man supremacy over the animals.

Now, this is another one that was repeated. Remember, man was given dominance over the earth at the end of Genesis 1, the same as He gives here to Noah. But, this command is even more forceful. The one He gives to Noah is more forceful than the one that He gives Adam, and this is particularly in the case of the animals' fear of man. Notice that it says, "and the fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon them," which is interesting. Man was not just to have dominion, as he had over the animals before the Flood, but the animals were going to become more fearful of man. That is the sense of this. Before the flood, perhaps the animals were a bit more docile, but after the flood, they were going to be very fearful of mankind, as they are today. Their fear would be heightened.

Now, this might have been very necessary at the time. Think about this: There were only eight human beings who came through the Flood. There were hundreds or thousands of beasts. And if the larger beasts like lions and tigers, and bears (oh my!) were not very afraid of humans, then how many ferocious attacks of carnivores would it take to absolutely eradicate humankind? So, God drove them away from mankind by giving them a dreadful fear of them. It is a fear that basically has remained ever since. This has given man absolute dominance on the earth. We could say then, perhaps, that this was even a more heightened fear of mankind, and we learn later on that this is going to be reversed in the Millennium. But, at this time, it is necessary, because man does not have quite the character to handle anything else.

3. God gives mankind permission to eat animal flesh.

This one has given a few people some problems, because many people believe that mankind before the Flood were vegetarians, and after the Flood, mankind became omnivorous, eating both. This is not the case. Obviously Abel brought of his own herd to offer sacrifice. Why did he have a herd, or a flock? Was he was just being nice, keeping them all together, and seeing how many he could produce?

The most obvious thing is that he was raising them for food and their byproducts like wool and leather. Another thing is that people have known, it was very well known, at least by Noah, that the animals have always been divided between clean and unclean. Why would that be? Well, the erudite scholars will tell you that it was because you had to sacrifice to God. It was only a theological thing that He would only accept certain animals, and everybody else did not eat meat at all. Well, that is stupid because more than half of the law of clean and unclean is telling us what we can eat, which we could not discern without God's knowledge revealed to us. The other part of it is what we can sacrifice to God, because He will not eat unclean things either. So, if He will not eat unclean things, but does eat clean things, then mankind, made in His image, could do the same.

See what I am trying to get at? The law of the clean and unclean presupposes that humans ate flesh before the Flood. Along with the fact that Abel raised animals of the flock and herd, and also that mankind was even given the teeth to eat flesh with.

So then, the sense of this passage again, comes out, if we understand it this way, is that the things God said in this section, are predominately reiterations of the commands He had given before the Great Flood. God is reconfirming the basic instructions He had given to mankind from his very beginning. So, in effect, what He is saying is that these are the ground rules, they are the same as before.

However here to Noah, they are given, or at least recorded in a bit more detail.

Also, some people think that this, "every moving thing that lives shall be food for you," is giving blanket permission to eat all animal flesh. On the surface, this would seem to be correct. It says, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Well, the law of the clean and unclean, again, known by Noah, is used against this. Besides, the analogy God uses, "I have given you all things, even the green herbs," is used against this as well. Do you eat every green herb? Would you go out and eat hemlock? That would be stupid. You would die. Would you go out and eat the berries of nightshade? There are poisonous plants. You might casually consider their character when you notice them as you go walking in the park or woods. It is common knowledge. So, we have come to learn that some green herbs, even though God may have given them as food for something, are not good for man. And it is certainly the same thing with the various animal flesh and meats. Just because they are there does not mean that they are good for food.

Now, the real reason why God said, "every moving thing that lives, shall be food for you," He is presupposing clean and unclean. Obviously, that is what Noah believed, and Noah did what God said. He was a very righteous man. This every moving thing that lives, is awkwardly worded in conveying not eating an animal that was already dead. That was an animal which could not move, because it either had died on its own, or torn and killed by another beast, or was sick and dying. So, what God is saying is, even if it is a clean sort, do not eat "road-kill." So, if it is a clean sort, and you did not kill it, do not eat it. God is turning them away from potentially serious health problems.

4. God restricts man from eating animals' blood because its life is in the blood.

Leviticus 17:10-16 'And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.' Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.' Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.' And every person who eats what died

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naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt.

So, we see both of these things coming together again, that God said not to eat something which died of itself, or torn by beasts; do not eat the blood. These things are once again together as mentioned in Genesis 9.

We know from science that the blood carries the life-sustaining oxygen to all the parts of the body. So, the breath of life is dissolved in the blood. When the creature's blood is spilled, it dies. The same happens to us when we are killed. Our blood goes out, and we die. Now, of course, as we get near to Passover, this is something we have to understand once again. There is a spiritual connection as well, with the sacrifice of Christ. It was His blood, the most precious life of the Creator God that was given for our forgiveness. It covers us as we approach the throne of God, allowing us to have a relationship with Him. So, it is taken up again to yet a higher level. Not only is there life in animals' blood, not only is there life in our human blood, but the Great Creator God came to this earth as a human being, and His blood was shed for us, to cover us, and to atone for us.

And so, the principle that comes out of all this is that we are supposed to remember when we eat meat, that a life was given so we may live. Then, we go up to the next level, and we are to apply this spiritually regarding His life given for our salvation.

God has already given the groundwork for this great theological understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by showing that the life is in the blood.

5. A murderer is to be slain for his crime.

There are very few laws shown in the chapters before the Flood. There are no Ten Commandments specifically written out, or any others written out whatsoever. And this has led some to conclude that the time before the Great Flood was absolutely lawless—*literally lawless*. There was no law.

However, this section seems to be resetting the ground rules again. So, there are laws that were there, but they are not put forth as laws. There must have been some government. There must have been law before the Flood. I cannot imagine any group of people whatever the size, for that long a time, being able to live together without some

sort of organization, without some sort of code of law. Whether or not it was followed is another thing. But, there must have been some sort of government, and some sort of law before the Flood.

So, I suggest that this thing about capital punishment is also a reiteration of the law before the Flood. The pre-Flood world just did not follow it. The reason I know that is because in Genesis 4, and go through the section on Cain and Abel, and what he said to God, "this punishment is more than I can bear, anyone who finds me will kill me." So, this presupposes that the law was that murderers were to be executed. And, in this case, it was anyone who found the murderer could take the life, well, according to Cain's interpretation of it, anyway. Of course, they were all either his brothers, or his nephews. So the avenger of blood principle was in effect from early on.

There is no mitigation of the penalty for premeditated murder. A life is taken, and then the taker's life will be forfeited. Manslaughter could be judged more leniently, as God showed later in Exodus 21, and Numbers 35, but a murderer could not take advantage of the city of refuge. The avenger of blood could execute him whenever he was found.

I do want to go into one more thing—the second reason. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, He made man." That was the second reason. He had shed blood—committed murder—therefore he needs to die, blood for blood. But the second reason is that man is made in the image of God. For a person to kill another person who is also in the image of God, is an outrage against God Himself. It is as if one is striking God personally.

God is Creator and Master, and all of humanity is also His creation, His creatures. He made each one of us. So, to kill one of God's potential children, even to end his physical life, is to take one of God's prerogatives to himself, because God can make, and He can slay. God can give life, and He has the right to take it away, and no one else does—except those who He has given the authority—in this case, the avenger of blood.

So, what we have here, then, is God puts two levels of fear of retribution. First, to the avenger of blood; that if a person murders, he needs to fear the one who will come after him and perform justice upon him. And second, there is God waiting to judge.

So you had better understand that if a man lifts his hand against another man, he is actually lifting his hand against God.

I am sure that God put this all in because he wanted to nip any proclivity of mankind to violence in the bud. So he emphasizes this command to Noah and his family, because

He wanted it to stop here. He did not want to see that very violent society reappear from before the Flood. So He gave permission for an avenger of blood to enact justice.

Now it is very interesting that one of the few traditions which has come down all through time to today is that Shem later killed Nimrod, the son of Cush, the son of Ham, because of his violence and tyranny. The myth is that he chopped Nimrod into various pieces and sent them around to the nations to remind them that it would not be tolerated on this side of the Flood. So it is very interesting that this is one of the few traditions that has come down to us from that time period. It fits in with Scripture here right after the Flood.

In conclusion, turn to Psalm 19. In a way, I believe this is what God was trying to get across to Noah and his family.

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the LOORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LOORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LOORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LOORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LOORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LOORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

Telling Noah, "Here are my laws. I'm giving them to you again. If you keep them you will be happy and will be blessed. Your family will be multiplied, and you will live in abundance and peace."

Is that not what we all want? It is unfortunate that man always ruins things through his disobedience. But, we can be of good cheer if we follow God's laws, we can have the peace of God's blessing, even in the midst of an evil and violent world.