

COVENANT RENEWAL

Genesis 1:26-28

Matthew 28:18-20

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THE NOAHIC COVENANT

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The Adamic covenant ends with Seth, whose name means *substitute*, or *appointed one*. God had given the world a new fallen Adam, the Old Man, in the line of Cain. So, although the Adamic covenant had provided the world with a New Adam, and brought the covenant to completion, it had also *failed* to provide the world with a New Adam who could overcome the Cainites. It had *promised* through the Word of God a Seed who would crush the head of the serpent, but from the description in the early verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis the corrupt seed had gained control. A true new covenant based on a true new Adam was needed. The old Adam had died, Seth, and a new Adam was born, Noah. A death had occurred and a resurrection was about to take place. This pattern will happen at the end and beginning of each new covenant all through the Scripture.

Transcendence (Geneaia 6:1-6)

As I mentioned in our study of the Adamic Covenant, covenants always begin with God's Word because there can be no life or new life apart from it. Just as the world was created through the Word in the Adamic Covenant, covenants cannot be started anew without the Word of God. They are created by the Word because life comes from it. Thus, the Noahic covenant is started by the Word of God when God pronounces His intentions toward a wicked generation and calls Noah to lead a remnant to salvation. He does so by a specific declaration with His Word.

At the beginning of the Noahic covenant, the issue is the Word of God. The truth of the Word of God is challenged, which is always the indicator that a previous covenant is close to death or has already died. How is the Word of God being attacked? The *promise* of God, which is the Word of God given to the serpent in the Garden telling of his defeat, is undermined. Man was *multiplying* the wrong way, which is another way of saying he was re-creating (literally, *procreating*) through covenant-breaking, a creation theme found at the beginning of the Adamic covenant. At the outset of the Noahic covenant a new world was being created not through compliance with the Word of God, the promise, but through *mixed marriages* between the Sethites ("sons of God") and the Cainites ("daughters of men").

Some interpreters in the history of the Church, including the Septuagint scholars, understand the phrase, "sons of God," to be a reference to angels on the basis of other passages that use the designation in a similar fashion (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). But other commentators among the orthodox Jewish and Christian community take this reference to mean *covenant-keeping sons of Seth*. Even though they cite passages where "sons of God" can refer to creatures other than men, they mainly argue that the angelic inter-

pretation does not make sense because the judgment of the flood was on *mankind and not the angels*. Whichever interpretation you like, however, does not negate the basic problem of a corrupt seed-line.

The inter-marriage of the Sethites and the Cainites had produced a race of giants, the Nephilim (Genesis 6:4), perhaps the same group to which the Greeks referred as the Titans. Interestingly, the wicked had become greater in number than the righteous but remember that their genealogy is always shorter, as the previous chapter indicates (Cf. Cain's and Seth's genealogies). Also, the mixture of the righteous with the wicked had produced a super-race of people but they were morally weak. This mixture of the covenant lines resulted from *unbelief* on the part of the Whites. They thought that they could bring about the promise by including the covenant-breakers. At this point in the covenant, the believer could not overcome the unbeliever whereas in the final New Covenant, the Apostle Paul tells the believer not to leave the unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:14). Whatever the believer has overcome the unbelief of the unbeliever. But in the Old Covenant, the unbelief of the unbeliever is stronger than the faith of the faithful.

From this we should see that the fundamental need for the renewal of the covenant through Noah was the *undermining of the Word of God* through Seth's descendants. But the attack came through the *family*, so that the family once again becomes the greatest foe of the Promise. Notice that all through the Bible, the attack on God's promises comes primarily through the family. This comes to a climax in ~~Jesus' own~~ ministry when He says, "Who are my mother, brother, etc."

Yet, the promise of God restores the family to make it a means of extending the promise itself. The family is also the means of fulfilling the promise. It does so in the life of Christ and in the Book of Acts. It is brought under the covenant of baptism for the fulfillment of the promise of God (Acts 2:39; Acts 16). It is even seen as a part of the salvation of the woman in the New Covenant (1 Timothy 2:22). Thus, the family is always at the point of attack because of its place in the fulfillment of the promise of God. If Satan can capture a family, he has thwarted the promise, the Word of God.

We should not fail to see also the other cause for covenant renewal, the breakdown of the mystical union between God and man. The Lord speaks and says, "My Spirit shall not rule in man," the literal translation (Genesis 6:3). Because of covenant corruption, God threatened to withdraw His Spirit, "breath," from man. He left His Spirit in one man that all men might once again be filled with His "wind."

Hierarchy (Genesis 6:7-12)

God left His Spirit in one man and his family, totalling

eight people, the number of new beginning (seven plus one). He chose Noah to be His covenant representative on the basis of *favor*, the word for *grace*. He gave Noah as a grace provision for the world. He saved the world through him and as such Noah is a type of Christ.

Noah was selected as the covenant representative because he had specifically obeyed the Adamic Covenant. He "walked with God," meaning he had not eaten of the forbidden fruit of the Cainite line. He had also been "fruitful and multiplied" by bearing three faithful sons, a direct fulfillment of the garden commands. He stood in direct contrast to the rest of the world, described as "violent" and "corrupt," the former being a description of the latter. "Violence" is the opposite of "being fruitful and multiplying." The Cainites had multiplied but they were also killers and violent, destructive people. Only the covenantally faithful can multiply without spreading violence.

Thus, Noah became the new priest, king, and prophet of the world. He was entrusted with the priestly role of guarding and mediating life to the world. He was given the kingly task of adorning the world so as to be a new Eden and garden. He was called to be God's counselor and preserver of the promise to the next generation as a prophet.

Ethical Stipulations (Genesis 6:13-9:7)

We should see that Noah was commanded to protect the old world and yet create a new one, the same commands given to Adam in the garden: guard yet multiply (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). Noah was first told to build an ark, a boat five-hundred-twenty-five feet long and fifty-two feet high. This boat preserved the old world, the first creation, by creating a new one, fulfillment of the guard-yet-multiply commands given to Adam; Noah was doing what Adam failed to do. It was designed like the first world. It had three levels matching the three levels (Genesis 6:16) of the first world order: Firmament, earth, firmament. Notice that it had a window in the roof of the first level. A door was placed in the *side* of the ark to give access to the New Covenant after the Flood. New life would come from the side of the ark just as new life was given to Adam from his side, Eve.

Noah was also given *food commands*. He was to bring *clean* and *unclean* animals. The only basis for determining what was *clean* is the reference to *corrupt* man on the basis of *violence*. Thus, *clean* animals were probably *domestic*, or associated with the Sethites because of their proximity or likeness, whereas the *unclean* animals were probably tied in some way to Cainite behavior. This same food principle will be carried through to the Mosaic covenant where unclean foods represent aspects of the Fall of man (Dust, etc.) and Gentiles.

Noah carried out commands of a "subduing" nature, to use Adamic covenant language (Genesis 7:7-12). He led the animals into the new world, the ark. He took two of each kind in compliance with God's command so that the new world could be established after the flood. As he obeyed, so the creation was protected from judgment. Keep in mind that the building of the ark took one *hundred* years. The establishment of a new world takes time.

As Noah obeyed the Lord, the Lord kept His Word. He closed the door behind Noah (Genesis 7:16) just as He had closed up the side on Eve, meaning God is the one who closes out the old and brings in the new covenant. The Lord then destroyed the world with a universal flood. He sends rain for *forty* days, a number representing the removal of the *flesh*, in this case the earth. All forty time periods have to do with testing and destroying the flesh. When this is done, a new man emerges. Note the *resurrection language*: "The water increased and *lifted up* the ark, so that it rose above the earth" (7:17). Indeed, the water was raised *fifteen cubits*, a resurrection number be-

cause it consists of the old **sabbath** number, seven, combined with the new sabbath number, eight; by the way the number of steps to the temple numbered fifteen and the Psalms of praise, numbering fifteen, were to be sung one on each step as the person approached the temple. The ark carried Noah's family up the watery stairs above the highest mountain, drawing then near to the heavenly temple of the Lord. Thus, the ark is a type of Christ. As the flesh is destroyed, the ark is raised. It happened to Noah and it happened to Christ, whose flesh was destroyed (though not corrupted) but at the same time was raised up!

The faithfulness of the Lord is seen in that "The Lord remembered Noah" (8:1). As Noah had obeyed God, the Lord remembered him. Obedience "refreshes" God's memory. The time designations are important. The flood began in the Spring of the Biblical year, the same time the Exodus and the Death/Resurrection of Christ later occurred. Even more interesting is the time when the window on the ark was opened (8:6), a time roughly corresponding to end of December when Christ was born. At this time, life was released from the ark in the form of a raven. A raven is attracted to and devours flesh, a fulfillment of God's concern before the flood (Genesis 6:3). When it didn't come back this signified that flesh was still on the earth. Then Noah sent out the dove, a bird attracted to life. He sent it out twice, once to testify that there was no new life and another to bear witness to the giving of new life. Thus, the first time the dove was sent out in the Bible was at the Flood, a time when there was still death. The second time the dove was sent out was at Jesus' baptism, pointing to a new Flood that brought new life.

Noah obeyed God and left the ark in the Spring time, the second month (8:14), going out to fulfill the Adamic commission of being fruitful and multiplying. He was given a new creation, as indicated by the expression, "The earth was dry," matching the raising up of the first creation earth (Genesis 1:9). He immediately went about carrying out the old Adamic commandments. He subdued, multiplied (8:17; 9:1), and established a new tree: the altar of wood for the burnt offerings. Burnt offerings were offerings of dedication not cleansing. God had cleansed the world so it was left to Noah to consecrate himself.

Notice that the Adamic commandments were transformed into *new commandments*. The old commandments were kept in a changed or transformed way. The *specification of the commandments* kept-yet-changed the Adamic commands. For example, Adam was to guard the garden, hence protecting life indicated by the fact that his *disobedience* brought death on the earth (Romans 5:11-12). Noah was told specifically, however, not to murder (Genesis 9:6) nor to drink blood (9:4), because it would remind man of violence and murder, the very things prohibited by the commandment to guard in the garden. Thus, we learn one of the essential principles for understanding the nature of a new commandment how law changes in the Bible. A new commandment is simply the old one applied in terms of a new person, in this case Noah. The relationship of the old commandment to the new person produces changes in the law.

Oath (Genesis 9:8-17)

God ratifies the Noahic covenant with an oath never to destroy the world again with water (9:9). This oath was made with word and *symbol*, the rainbow. First, this bow is literally the word for *warbow*. It faced *God*, as all rainbows demonstrate. Thus, God took the sanction on Himself to show man that He had the implied arrow of the bow aimed at *Him*. It was *through* His reception of death that man would have life!

Second, the rainbow around the earth was a form of

circumcision. Indeed, circumcision language is used, telling us that the Flood was the circumcision of the world: "flesh was cut off" (9:11).

Finally, the rainbow is a covenant symbol to remind God of His covenant. The significance of any covenant symbol is to remind the Lord of His covenant promises to us. These symbols may seem insignificant. Man may ignore them. But the principle taught through the rainbow is that God never forgets because the covenant symbols remind Him. Every time we engage in a covenant symbolic act, we remind God of His promise. This brings God's sanctions on us.

Succession (Genesis 9:20-32)

The succession of the covenant is made clear. It is through *Shem*. He becomes the heir because he sewes as a proper covenant substitute when his father sins (9:21). Since his name is mentioned first, he was probably the covenantal leader in covering up the sin of his father. Thus, he was the true heir because he removed the sins of his father!

— Noah and Christ

Christ is a new Noah, constantly involved with water in a particular Noahic fashion. Once when the disciples were in a boat on the water in the midst of a storm, He walks to the boat and calms the seas (John 6:16-21). As long as their boat did not have Christ, the disciples are in danger of drowning, being judged with water. He turned the boat into an ark just as Noah had built an ark to save a remnant, out of which came the future of the world. Noah, however, was not simply in the ark building business. He was part of the baptism of the world. The baptism of Christ, therefore, primarily develops the relationship between Noah and the gospel.

Simple observation of the elements point out the relationship between Noah and Christ. The symbolism of water baptism is the most obvious. But perhaps the use of the dove to mark out a new covenant of peace stands as an even greater parallel between Noah and Christ. Beyond the symbolism, the elements of the covenant provide a clear explanation of the relationship between the two.

First, the distinctive transcendent element of the Noahic covenant and Christ is the parallel between God's **declaration** in both instances. In Noah's day, the Lord speaks concerning the sinful condition of the world (Genesis 6:1-6). God transcendentally passed judgment on the world and found it guilty. But, He also transcendentally declared the person through whom the world would be restored, Noah. He did the same with Jesus. He said at the baptism, "This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). The development in Christ's baptism seems to be the declaration of **sonship**, a feature as we will see continues in the Church's baptism. Nevertheless, at Noah's cleansing of the world and Christ's baptism God makes a statement of declaration.

Second, the hierarchy of the Noahic covenant is fulfilled in Christ through the unique parallel of representation. God spoke to the world and Noah's family through Noah. He did not speak directly to the world. He used a covenant representative. But there was a sense in which no one knew for sure that God had spoken to Noah until the Flood came. The first baptism of the world was the means whereby God's representative was confirmed. At the baptism of Christ, God specifically points out the representative role of Christ through His voice and the symbols of spirit and dove. Thus, Christ is marked by water as God's covenant representative just as was Noah.

Third, the ethical parallel between Noah and Christ is found in the statement by Christ to John the Baptist, "Per-

mit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). The placing of water on Christ was for the establishment of righteousness on the earth. In a similar way water was put on the earth for the same purpose in Noah's day. In Noah's day, God was prepared to send the Flood because of unrighteousness, saying, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in all the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . And the Lord said, 'I will destroy man'" (Genesis 6:5-7). Yet, God spared the earth because He found a specific ethical qualification in one man. He specifically takes note of Noah's righteousness, saying, "Noah was a just [righteous] man, perfect in all his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Thus, as Noah fulfilled God's ethical requirements and saved the world, so Christ did the same at His personal flood when He was baptized on the Cross, this event which was specifically called a baptism (Mark 10:38).

Fourth, the oath aspect of the Noahic covenant is fulfilled in Christ in the parallel between the oath taken by God at the Flood and the oath made at Jesus' baptisms. At the Flood, God made a promise, thereby becoming an oath, to destroy the world. He did, but afterwards He promised never to judge the world again with water. At Christ's baptism of John the Baptist, God makes an oath when He speaks of being well pleased with His Son. This is actually an oath to place judgment on Him, for He was acknowledging Jesus' obedience to the purpose for which He was called, death on the Cross. It is not surprising, therefore, that God the Father repeats the same statement while Jesus hangs at the point of death. The repetition pulls the two baptisms together. With Noah, God had judged the world. At the Cross, God had judged the world through Christ. The Father's oath at both occasions was instrumental in the promise and fulfillment of both.

Finally, the succession parallel between the Noahic covenant and Christ was the use of water to transfer the inheritance of the world to God's faithful. The covenant of Noah was by means of the Flood. The wicked were removed as the waters consecrated the earth by setting the world apart for God's use once again. At Christ's baptism, God once again used water. Christ was literally baptizing the world through His baptism. He was certainly not being baptized to remove His sins. Rather, He stood in the midst of the waters on the border of the land as the New Creation Himself. When the waters touched Him, *they* were transformed not Him. His righteousness set apart the waters because life flowed from Him. The Jordan and the waters of the earth were therefore set apart for future baptisms by His being baptized. And, the world set symbolically cleansed just as the Flood had washed the earth. Thus, Christ baptized the waters, that symbolize the world (Daniel 7:3).

In summary, Christ's baptism is a new Noahic Flood. When our Lord was baptized, He uniquely fulfilled what occurred with Noah. The ramifications of this are now seen as we consider another baptismal flood, the baptism of the Church.

Noah and the Church

The Apostle Peter says, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism cloth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 20-21). With this statement, Peter connects the Flood, Christ's baptism, and the baptism of the Church. The Church ultimately fulfills Noah's Flood and the baptism of Christ. The Biblical covenant explains.

First, by associating the Flood with baptism (1 Peter 3:21), Peter makes baptism a transcendent declaration of sonship. The Flood was the occasion for God to declare the guilt of the world and His selection of Noah to save a remnant. The Baptism of Christ was a declaration of Christ as the Son who would carry out the Father's will. And since the Church's baptism is the point at which the Triune Name of God is received, this initiatory rite becomes a declaration of sonship. A baptizand becomes literally an adopted son by being given the Father's Name. Thus, the Church carries on the work of sonship by extending what the Son began, the salvation of the world.

Second, regarding the hierarchy of the covenant, the Flood made Noah and his family covenant representatives. There was a double representation. Noah represented God and his family would represent his representation of God to the world. This double representation repeats itself with Christ. Baptism legally declares Him as the covenant representative for His people. By requiring baptism as the entrance rite into the covenant, the Church simultaneously 'receives Christ as its representative and becomes a representative for Him in the world. The Church after all bears His Name.

Third, just as the Flood had an ethical objective and as the Baptism of Christ was for the fulfillment of righteousness, so the baptism of the Church has ethical implications. The Church's baptism is supposed to involve, "Not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (3:21). This is personal purification. But the Apostle Peter continues with a comment that suggests more than individual purification results from baptism. He says that the baptism of the Church is "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (3:21-22). Since these are the powers with which the Church does spiritual combat (Ephesians 6:10), baptism produces civilizational purification in addition to the personal. Was not this the result of the Flood? Given Peter's association between the Flood and the Church's baptism, there can be no mistake about Peter's understanding of the cultural responsibilities of the Church.

Fourth, Peter continues the oath aspect in baptism that we observed at the Flood and Christ's baptism. He says that the Church's baptism is "The answer of a good conscience toward God" (3:21). W.J. Dumbrell, former dean at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, builds on W.J. Dalton's important work,¹ and he observes that Peter uses specific legal terminology associated with entering into a contract. He comments,

What . . . Peter goes on to explain is that baptism is an "appeal to God for a clear conscience." The interesting word in this last quotation is Greek *eperotema*, translated as "appeal". Such a translation, however,

hardly seems to do justice to a New Testament theology of baptism, since this would reduce baptism to no more than an acted prayer. The word *eperotema*, however, occurs in the contemporary legal terminology in the technical sense of "entering into a contract." This would make a translation of "commitment" or "pledge" a possibility, with the thought perhaps of that undertaking made at the time by the candidate for baptism which would correspond to baptismal confession [emphasis mine].²

Thus, the Church fulfills by its baptismal oath the oath at Noah's Flood that was fulfilled in Christ. More to the point, the Church becomes the specific agent of sacramental sanctions. The Flood itself is the chief symbol of the sanction. Although God will not destroy the world through a flood, the water of baptism symbolizes the sanctioning power of God that is unleashed through the Church.

Finally, the specific blessing of God that was transferred back to the world through Noah is connected with the Church's baptism. As the waters of the Flood restored the earth, so the baptism of the Church does the same. The blessing of the Resurrected Christ is extended. Again, the cosmic implications should be self evident. When Peter associates the Flood with Christian baptism, he forces the Church to parallel how its baptism will restore the earth in an analogous way to the Flood.

Concision

Noah was used to save the world through the Flood. In many ways, he established a better place because sin had been removed. He gave the world better sacrifices, meaning better redemption that provided for a complete new start. In spite of the fresh beginning, however, he failed through his sons. From the sin transmitted generationally to them, he passed on the sins of the old world, the one prior to the Flood. And through the sins of his sons, the world once again rebelled against God at the Tower of Babel, resulting in the division of the earth into *nations*. This division retarded the growth of sin but it also made the expansion of God's kingdom much more difficult. Geographic, racial, and linguistic barriers were set up as an outworking of one man's family sins; so much for thinking the world can save itself through the family. Through Christ, however, a newer and better Noah emerged. Jesus proved to be a better-than-Noah by sending out the disciples to reach the nations that had been formed as a result of Noah's sin (Matthew 28:19-20). He specifically told them to baptize the nations, which given Peter's association of the Flood with Christian baptism, implies that a new flood of baptism was to cover the earth. When He commissioned the twelve before His Ascension, He was effectively beginning the reversal of the fail of Noah's sons. Thus, Christ and the Church were a second Noah. They fulfilled where the captain of the first ark had failed.

1. W.J. Dalton, Christ's *Proclamation to the Spirits*, *Analecta Biblica* 23, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1965), p. 225.

2. W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), pp. 40-41.