

98-07-26a Genesis Chapter 9- New Rules Custom

We will begin our worship this morning as we always do, by asking God's blessing on us as we fellowship together in His Word. Shall we pray? Father, we thank You for the many blessings that You have bestowed on us. We thank You for deliverance from this present evil age through our Savior Jesus Christ.

We thank You for Your abundant grace, Your love that You have expressed to us in so many ways. We thank You for Your provision. We thank You for the challenges that come our way and that give us opportunities for faith and opportunities for growth, opportunities to come to a greater appreciation for You and for the Savior in whom we live and have our being.

We pray as we spend time looking at the truth of Your Word this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, give us understanding not only of the concepts and the truths that we find before us, but also give us insight as to its application and meaning in our lives so that we will be motivated and walk in a way that is worthy and pleasing in Your sight. We pray for those who are not with us this morning, that You will be with them and preserve and protect them and restore them to us. We know that each one of us is gifted and we benefit greatly from the presence and the ministry of each one.

We ask Your blessing on us now. In Jesus' name, Amen. Turn with me for a scripture reading this morning to Isaiah chapter 54.

Isaiah 54. This is a song of restoration for Israel. We're in a section of Genesis where God has judged the earth and as Noah and the animals, Noah's family, as they emerge from the ark, it is a time of restoration after judgment.

So we will see some common themes and we will actually see an explicit reference to Noah in this reading this morning. Isaiah 54. Sing, O barren, you who have not born.

Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman, says the Lord. We could stop right there and spend a lot of time.

Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings. Do not spare, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes, for you shall expand to the right and to the left and your descendants will inherit the nations and make the desolate cities inhabited. Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed.

Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame, for you will forget the shame of your youth and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. He is called the God of the whole earth.

For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused, says your God. For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

For this is like the waters of Noah to me. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so I have sworn that I would not be angry with you nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you.

O you afflicted one tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.

In righteousness you shall be established. You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear, and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Indeed, they shall surely assemble, but not because of me.

Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake. Behold, I have created the blacksmith who blows the coals in fire, who brings forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the spoiler to destroy. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me, says the Lord." It's a wonderful song of promise addressed specifically to Israel as a nation, and we're going to return to some of the concepts that are put forward in this chapter as we see God's statements to Noah in Genesis chapter 9. The flood is the end of one epoch and the beginning of another in human history. It closes one age and begins another. It's a watershed in the unfolding of God's plan as it is revealed in the Old Testament.

I'd like to just, as we move forward from the flood, review and summarize some of the observations that are pertinent at this point. One of the reasons that we know that the flood is critically important, not only historically, but also in the revelation of God in the Old Testament, is the unique nature of the event and its record in Scripture. If you think about it, this is the only dated event in Genesis.

You can think about the creation of Adam, you can think about the fall in the garden or the expulsion from the garden, the murder of Abel. There are many incidents that you might think would be historically fixed by some date reference in Genesis. The Tower of Babel, the dispersing of the nations, the call of Abram when God says, Other than the births and deaths that are recorded at various points, these are the generations of, the

only event in Genesis that is given a date is the flood.

And it's emphasized that this is a dated event. Five different times it is fixed by way of a date. And you can see this in Genesis 7, 11, Genesis 8, 4, 5, 13, and 14.

And we've seen those passages as we've gone through chapters 7 and 8, but 7, 11 tells us that, it references it to Noah's life, the 600th year of Noah's life. It doesn't just give us the year, it gives us the month and the day that the flood comes on the earth. It tells us that this is a big deal, this is something to be sure we have a grip on in terms of our understanding of the Old Testament.

And again in chapter 8 verse 4, the ark rests in the 7th month, the 17th day of the month. You go forward to verse 5 and verse 13 and verse 14 of Genesis 8. The events connected with the flood, its rise and its receding are all given specific date references. It's very unusual, it's the only time it happens in Genesis.

Why is that? I've told you before that I think there's more going on with some of these dates than I am able to discern and that's just a limitation that I and many others labor under. But you also have references in this account to very significant biblical numbers. Periods of 7 days, the number 7 keeps recurring, the number 40 is mentioned several times, the number 150, different phases of the flood.

These are highly significant numbers in the scriptures. 7 is the number of completion, it goes back to the days of creation. It's the basis for time, time is measured in 7s.

The Sabbath principle is based on 7s and we get the idea that perhaps Noah observed the Sabbath, although it's not explicitly mentioned because of the interval in sending forth the birds from the ark. 40 is the number of testing, 40 days and nights of rain on the earth, the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness by Israel, the 40 days of testing of Jesus in the desert, over and over again these numbers recur and they're clustered here in the account of the flood. The phrase, on this very day, that is used in the entrance into the ark, when God says, when He speaks to Noah and on that very day Noah enters the ark, this phrase is used elsewhere in scripture of significant events like Abraham's circumcision.

In chapter 17 verse 23 of Genesis, where we will be in the not too distant future, when God speaks on that very day, Abraham takes his household and they're circumcised. That language is used again in Exodus 12.41, on that very day they marched out of the land of Egypt. The death of Moses, God speaks to Moses, puts him up on Mount Pisgah and reveals the promised land in Deuteronomy 32.48, on that very day Moses' death takes place.

Another indication that this is a great signpost or milestone in the unfolding of God's plan is Noah's line. Noah is the father of three sons and many times when you find a father

with three sons, it's marking the end of an era and the introduction of a new one. Who was the first father of three sons? A little pop quiz here.

Adam. Adam is the father of three sons. This is the inception of the human race.

Of course, one of those sons gets knocked out of the box early. But Noah is the father of three sons. Terah, the father of Abram, is the father of three sons.

And this, of course, is the beginning of the age of the patriarchs. So, you have this additional symmetry. We ask ourselves, these are interesting concepts, interesting characteristics of this account, but we ask ourselves the question, well, so what? Obviously, the great rearrangement of the earth's surface, the tremendous judgment that the flood represents is a significant event, but what conclusion do we draw? What application do we make of that? Why is there such an emphasis on this event? It's one of the things we're going to look at in our studies this morning because we're going to see, as we've already anticipated, that in many ways the emergence of Noah from the ark, the re-creation of the earth, as it were, after this judgment, harks back to Genesis chapter 1 and the creation, the initial beginning of the earth.

And there are many close parallels, and we want to note those and then figure out what the significance of that is. And it becomes more remarkable the further we look. You know, of course, as we've mentioned, that there is language that harks back, the references to the animals, the birds and the creeping things, all in whom is the breath of life.

This language that's used of the animals coming onto the ark is used back in Genesis chapter 1 at the initial creation. These ties backward to the first or the original creation have significance for us. And you remember when we were going through those initial chapters, what was one of the great notable things that came out of that as we observed God's activity in creating the earth and in populating it and in prescribing the order of things.

If you remember back in those early chapters, we observed the fact that this was a great contrast when Israel got the books of the law from Moses, when these accounts were given to the nation of Israel and they looked at the account of creation and at the nature of the God of creation, the God of Israel, the God delivering them from bondage in Egypt. It was a great contrast to what was prevalent in surrounding cultures in terms of their concept of divine things. The Egyptians, of course, had all this pantheon of gods.

There were some of them that were associated with the sun and with jackals and fish and one thing and another. The Mesopotamian traditions that surrounded the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the early days of the nation of Israel, we noted that. We saw that they had their pantheon of gods.

And the contrast between a God of purpose, a God of order, a God who is consistent came out in this. We saw that God is dominant over the chaotic waters. God is the origin of things.

And if you remember and review your notes perhaps on those early chapters, we noted many of the contrasts between the Mesopotamian traditions that presented man as sort of an afterthought. This pantheon of gods is up there and they sort of get tired of going to the refrigerator and getting their own food. They say, well, let's create man.

He'll be our servant. He'll bring us the food. And I noted briefly at that time that as you follow these competing traditions, if you will, in the cultures surrounding Israel, this story moves forward from creation to the flood.

And you have the Gilgamesh epic and the legend of Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, who is the man preserved through the flood. And many of these concepts are parallel. Utnapishtim is preserved in an ark, but its proportions are all wrong.

It's sort of cubical. And the flood only lasts three days. And there are lots of other strange anomalies.

But there continues to be, as there has been in the early parts of Genesis, there continues even down through this flood account to be a stark contrast with the competing philosophies and the alternatives to faith in God that surround the Israelites. Let me just note a few of these. We've already seen in the early chapters of Genesis that there's a contrast between the God of the Bible, who is supreme, who is omnipotent, who is all of the omnis, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and so forth, to the pantheon that was presented in Mesopotamian and Babylonian traditions and in the Egyptian view of things.

There's numerous gods, and they're struggling and competing with one another. They're at strife with one another. The whole reason the flood comes about is that after, in the Mesopotamian tradition, after they've created man and they get him going to serve them, and so they don't have to bother about food and so forth.

Well, man multiplies, and he gets very noisy. They're fertile. They replicate like rabbits, and these gods look down there and say, this man thing didn't turn out to be such a good idea.

They're making lots of racket. They're a distraction to us. And so the gods get together, and they say, let's just send a flood on the earth and wipe out all of these men.

They're noisy. They're bothering us. And so it's sort of a committee decision to wipe out this little servant, underling race that they've created.

But there's one god who sort of disagrees, and so he picks out his man, his little faithful

worshiper, and unbeknownst to the other gods, he gives him the word that the flood's coming, and he preserves him. And this is Napishtim, or it has another name in the Gilgamesh epic. The gods go ahead and send this flood, but this is almost a Keystone Cops kind of pantheon, because they say, well, let's all make the flood so they do.

But when they let loose the flood, it sort of gets out of hand, and they can't control it, and it wipes out a lot more than they intended to, and it makes a huge mess. And these gods are all afraid. In fact, the literal phrasing in the tradition is that the gods were cowering like dogs against the wall at the fury and force of the flood.

They run away from their own creation. It confuses and confounds them. And when this one individual survives the flood, the rest of the gods don't know it, and one of the supreme gods, Enlil, when he comes around to their next big banquet meeting, he finds out, to his surprise, that one of the humans has survived, that this god sort of preserved his man and got him through the flood.

Then there's another big round of strife, and it's disorganized. These gods are self-centered. They're spiteful.

They bicker. They do things behind each other's back. They undercut each other and thwart each other's plans.

It reminds you of what must be going on in the realm of the fallen angels and the demons. And you get the idea that perhaps some of the source of these traditions is this pre-flood situation where you had the angels who kept not their first estate, and they've gotten involved with mankind, and they've become petty and bickering, and you've got demonic infiltration. A lot of these legends come across with the eight individuals in the Ark and are the seeds of the mythology that permeates all of the ancient cultures and comes down through the Romans and the Greeks and all of this idea of a pantheon of gods who are in charge and who bicker and fight with one another and do violence to one another.

This goes back to the violence that God sees on the earth when the angels don't do what they're supposed to do in terms of guiding the human race in the right direction, and the intermingling of men with the supernatural or the gods. We have this sort of echoed now in these TV series with Hercules and the warrior princess. I can't think of her name.

Now I saw where they've got, I think, Ulysses. All of these are proliferating. Sinbad.

There are several of these. Not the late night guy, but the actual legend, Sinbad. He's got his own show now.

All of these people are fascinated by this, and they're sort of playing off the interest in angels and the supernatural that many have fallen victim to. But this is what people were putting forward as an understanding of why man exists, what the purpose of life is,

why things happen, why do we have crop failures, why do we have disasters and wars. Well, it's the caprices of the gods.

They're bickering up there. They're throwing rocks at each other. They're interfering and thwarting and getting themselves involved in human affairs, and this is why things happen.

The truth of the Word of God when it comes to Israel from the pen of Moses is in stark contrast. There's not a pantheon of bickering gods who don't know what one or the other is doing. There is one supreme God who's omnipotent.

He has a design. He has a plan. He's not petty.

He's not vindictive. He's not just a superhuman with all that that implies and the depravity of humanity. He is moral.

He's just. He is consistent. He has a righteous standard, and he enters into covenant.

One of the big contrasts is that God says, I will establish, I will confirm my covenant with you, Noah. We have a covenant relationship, and that covenant is finite. It has conditions.

Noah understands and appreciates that covenant with God and flourishes under it. He is obedient. He is righteous before God, and that's the basis of his deliverance.

It isn't spite. It isn't secrecy. It's not this weird thing you have in the Mesopotamian tradition.

The stress in the Mesopotamian flood story, whether you look at Gilgamesh or Utnapishtim or whatever the other variations on this theme are, the hero of the flood, the one who survives, is pictured as clever and resourceful. He makes plans. He sort of provides for himself.

He manipulates the gods in such a way as to get himself through. In the biblical account, I think this is one of the reasons that we have so little record of what Noah did, because the emphasis in the biblical account is not on Noah's actions. It says whatever God said, he did.

Noah's actions are tied to the word of the Lord, the covenant with God, and his pleasing God through obedience and faith. That is the basis of Noah's deliverance, and the basis of the deliverance of those with him is tied to Noah. Noah's deliverance is tied to the faithfulness of God in covenant relationship.

It makes sense. There's a plan. There's an order.

There is an absolute that doesn't change, and it's God himself. It's a huge contrast. Just

as today, genuine Christianity, biblical Christianity, stands in stark contrast to everything that surrounds it, including the false and distorted Christianity that goes under the name today.

We're going to explore that a little more as we go forward. But God has a plan. God has a purpose.

God has a basis for acting the way he does. He's not capricious. He is not subject to whims or whimsy in what he does.

The basis for judgment is man's evil imagination. The basis for deliverance is Noah's righteousness, which comes by faith. Noah is blameless.

Noah is righteous. Noah walks with God. Noah conforms himself to God's standard and is therefore blessed and preserved.

There is a way of attaining relationship with God and covenant blessing from God that is clear. We're not in the grip of forces beyond our control. In the Mesopotamian tradition, even the gods themselves are in the grip of forces beyond their control.

They start the flood, and then the flood gets out of hand, and it scares them, and they run away. They crouch against the wall until it's over. So this was a tremendous contrast and a tremendous opportunity for understanding the way things really are that's presented in the book of Genesis.

And you remember the original recipients of this book and this understanding, which had been preserved in a family sense from father to son within the community of the faithful, now was given to the nation of Israel in the five books of the law after the exodus. So we continue to see that a polemic is an argument or a refutation, if you will, of prevailing thought and prevailing wisdom. And in that sense, Genesis itself and the account, the truth in Genesis, is a polemic against the false truths, the false philosophies, the false religions of the day.

And it continues to be today. When we come to an understanding of the truth and the emphasis that God presents in this account, it continues to do the same thing today. We think, well, the Mesopotamians were all fouled up, but we've got it all straight today.

Stop and think. What sort of Christianity is put forward today? What sort of religions compete with biblical truth today? There is a lot of misunderstanding. There's a lot of the idea that God can be manipulated, that God can be pleased by things that we do or by hair shirts that we wear or guilt that we assuage by going off and sort of evening the scale by our own actions, and that God, in some views, is as capricious as the Mesopotamian pantheon or the Egyptian pantheon, that God is inscrutable and sometimes He just does things and there is no explaining it.

That's not the God of the Bible. That is not a right biblical theology. God reveals Himself.

God makes Himself known in an understandable, coherent, predictable way. Relationship with God is possible. Relationship with God is encouraged.

It is God's desire that we know Him. We've seen this in Colossians 1. Paul's prayer for believers is that we all come to a greater and greater knowledge of the will of God, not a respect for the inscrutability of God, but a knowledge of the plan and purpose of God. It is knowable.

It is predictable. It is a standard that does not change. He is a God who does not change, and He reveals Himself.

So, these concepts that we're seeing in Genesis continue to do the things that they did when they were first delivered to mankind and ultimately expressed for Israel. Now, the parallels to creation, the initial creation that we've seen in the first few chapters of Genesis, are numerous and they become more striking the more that we look at them. I've already mentioned the references to animals in chapter 6 and verse 7. The Lord says, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.

Of course, even that verb created, bara, is from Genesis chapter 2 and chapter 3. I will destroy him from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air. I am sorry that I have made them. This language is just all taken from the early chapters of Genesis.

And you find this again in chapter 7 verse 21. All flesh died that moved on the earth, birds and cattle and beasts, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. It is a reversing of the creation that we have just observed in the earlier part of the book.

And this language we found originally in Genesis chapter 1 verses 20 through 26, where God says, Let the waters abound with living creatures. Let the birds fly. God created the sea creatures, every living thing that moves, every winged bird.

God said, Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the waters and the seas. Let birds multiply on the earth.

Let the earth bring forth living creatures, cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth. In verse 24 of chapter 1, each according to its kind. Verse 25, God made the beasts of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth.

So we are encouraged to link these things in our mind. The animals that are destroyed, it is the undoing of what God did in chapter 1. And then we see again in the emergence from the ark, in chapter 8 verse 18 and 19, Noah went out and his sons and his wife and

his sons' wives with him, every animal, every creeping thing, every bird and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families. This is sort of the after its kind motif.

Went out of the ark. So you have the repopulation of the earth with language that ties it back to chapter 1. During the flood, you remember the springs of the deep, the fountains of the deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened and water comes up from below and it comes down from above and meets in the middle to flood the earth. And this is the undoing of what happened in Genesis chapter 1. You remember back in verse 3 of chapter 1, one of the first things God says after creating the light and the darkness and the light in verse 6, He says, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters.

So God made the firmament, divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. So God separated the waters from the waters. He put some above and some below.

He undoes that in the flood and those waters above and below meet once again so that you have a pre-creation status of the waters. And you have this turmoil of the waters covering the earth and the turmoil on the face of the deep. We also saw the Ruach HaElohim, the spirit of God that moved on the face of the waters in Genesis 1-2 is the same Ruach HaElohim that in chapter 8 verse 1 when God remembers Noah, God made a Ruach pass over the earth and the waters subside.

None of this is accidental. This is designed to remind us of the first week of history. Even the progression of the receding of the waters and the progression of the dry land appearing reminds us of what happened when God caused the waters to be gathered together in one place.

He says back in chapter 1 verse 9, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear. And it was so. God called the dry land earth and the gathering together of the waters He called seas.

Remember that? Well, what happens as the flood waters recede? What's the first thing that happens? The mountaintops appear. The dry land appears out of the chaotic waters which mirrors what happened in creation week. What's the next thing that happens? You remember that we talked about the sending forth of the birds back and forth? We'll talk about that a little bit more here shortly.

But as the waters recede and the dry land continues to appear, what was the next thing that happened in Genesis chapter 1? Go back to verse 11. God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself on the earth. Verse 12, The earth brings forth grass, herbs, trees with their seeds, and God saw that it was good.

So after the dry land appears, then you have the appearance of vegetation. But what's the next thing that Noah sees after the mountaintops and he starts seeing the dry land appear out of the waters? What does the dove bring him? A freshly plucked olive branch, an olive leaf. It's mirroring the progress of creation week.

You have the dry land appear, then you have the vegetation. And so that's another parallel. And then finally, after the vegetation, God creates the animals and tells them to be fruitful and multiply on the earth.

When the ark door opens, the animals go out and they become fruitful and multiply and populate the earth. So you go from dry land to vegetation to animal life after the flood, just as you did in creation week. And of course, man out there.

And you find a sort of review even of the early events of the first several chapters of Genesis as we're going to see when we get into Genesis chapter 9. The words of blessing that God used in the initial creation, be fruitful and multiply, like in chapter 1 verse 28, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and so forth. We're going to see that same thing in Genesis chapter 9. The very first verse, God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. It's virtually identical to 128.

Remember that after the fall, there was a curse on the ground. The part of the consequences of man's sin is that the ground suffers. We're going to see that there is also cursing language that comes up in God's statements to Noah after he leaves the ark.

We'll save that for our review and perusal of chapter 9. We're also going to see a fascinating parallel between Adam, who is the father of three sons, and the progenitor of human life in his era, and Noah, who is the father of three sons and the progenitor of life in his era. There are some fascinating parallels that we are about to see and we're going to gain insight both from what we know about Adam and things that happened in the first era that will help us understand some things going on with Noah. We're also going to see some things with Noah that are going to help us understand looking back at the chapters we've already studied.

So it's fruitful ground for meditation and that's where we will be in Genesis chapter 9 when we come back from our break.