

OT Narratives Bible Study Series Genesis 9-11 - A New Beginning...

For Review: In Genesis 6-8, why did God destroy the earth with a Flood? What warnings and encouragements does the account of Noah and the Flood give us today?

- Sin/wickedness had spread and filled the earth - "the wickedness of man was great" (6:5)
 - unrestrained evil --> every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually
 - God was grieved that He had made Man --> would destroy mankind and all that was under their dominion
- God will judge sin and evil one day
 - even if it seems He isn't doing anything about evil in the world today because He is patient & wanting all to come to repentance, there will come a day when He will judge the world in righteousness, and that day will catch many unaware (cf. 2 Peter 2-3)
- a warning to turn away from evil, but also an encouragement for His people
 - though He will judge the world, He remembers those who by faith belong to Him and will show them mercy

Read Genesis 8:18 - 9:29

-In what ways does this passage parallel Genesis 1-3? (for example, compare 9:1-3 with 1:26-31; etc.) In what ways does it differ? What's the take-home message?

- Genesis 8-9 is a new creation, of sorts
 - a new start for the earth and for mankind after the Flood
 - starts a 'New Creation' motif that runs throughout the Bible
 - God blesses mankind and commissions them to be fruitful & multiply, to fill the earth (9:1-2,7, cf. 1:28)
 - Man being created in the image of God is mentioned in both (1:26-27; 9:6)
 - God gives mankind dominion over the animals, and grants mankind them food (9:2-3, cf. 1:29)
 - BUT now the animals will fear & dread mankind (9:2) --> reflecting new permission for Man to kill & eat the animals
 - also, with the grant of food, there is a prohibition (as there was in Eden) --> no eating blood
 - a recognition that life belongs to God
 - comes also with a recognition of the special nature of Man's life, since Man is created in God's image (9:5-6)
 - as in Eden, there is a penalty for violation of the prohibition (although in this case, it's of taking the life/blood of Man)
- as in Genesis 3, here also there is a 'fall' --> Noah's drunkenness (9:20ff)
 - nakedness as a cause of shame in both accounts (but in Gen. 3 they recognized their nakedness, whereas Noah did not)
 - a son acts unrighteously, and another (or the other 2 in this case) acts righteously
 - the unrighteous behavior results in a curse (in this case, on Ham's son), as it did on Cain
- perhaps different from Genesis 1-3, God establishes a covenant here with Noah and his sons (though some would argue that God made a covenant at Creation with Adam)
 - > God would never again destroy all life by a flood, despite mankind's wickedness
- take-home message - yes, it's a new beginning, but not "good" and "very good" as the original was
 - death is part of the new creation from the start, to the extent that God needs to place boundaries around it
 - the Flood did not take care of Man's sin problem --> Noah falls
 - points to the need for a greater "New Creation" and a greater Covenant (cf. Isaiah 54:9-10 looks forward to a new covenant with Zion, which would never be removed)

Read Genesis 10

-What is the significance of Noah's curse on Canaan (9:24-26)? [Who were the descendants of Canaan (10:15-19)? See also Gen. 11:31; 15:17-21; 18:20-21; 19:24-25; Deut. 7:1-6; 20:16-18]]

- it's uncertain why Noah cursed Canaan instead of Ham, but whatever the reason, his curse proved to be prophetic
 - as with the descendants of Cain (Gen. 4), we see the beginnings of a line that would rebel against God
 - perhaps Canaan was even worse than Ham? ("like father like son")
- some people historically have tried to use this curse to justify slavery of people of African descent, whom they argued were descendants of Ham - not justified from the text itself
- Canaan's descendants were the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (11:31)
 - the nations whose land God promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:17-21), and whom the Israelites were later commanded to destroy (Deut. 7:1-6)
 - included the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah, which God would destroy (19:24-25)
- Noah's curse/prophecy was fulfilled historically in the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah, and in the Israelite conquest of the land of Canaan

Read Genesis 11:1 - 12:3

-What was wrong with what the people of Babel were doing in building the city & the tower, and why did God put an end to it?

- an act of rebellion against God
 - trying to set themselves up against God
 - rejecting His mandate to fill the earth
 - seeking glory & a great name for themselves, rather than the glory of God
 - building a tower that reaches into heaven
 - not literally so they could go meet God, but the idea that they themselves would be gods
 - reminiscent of the serpent's promise that 'you will be like God'
- ironically, though they thought they were building such a great tower, God had to 'come down' to see it
- God's concern was not that His supremacy was being threatened, or that mankind would be able to do great things (like building a tower that reached into the heavens)
 - rather, "this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" speaks how far into evil and rebellion that they could go
 - slowing the progression to the kind of unrestrained evil that we saw in Genesis 6, which resulted in God destroying the world

-Can you think of any modern-day equivalents of the Tower of Babel?

- for example,
 - mankind's pride & rebellion against God - in setting selves up against God
 - trying to glorify self
- facilitated today by technology & a common world language?
- > images in Revelation of a new world order/religion unified against God

-How do Genesis 10 & 11 parallel Genesis 4-6? How does this set the stage for what's coming in Genesis 12:1-3?

- Gen. 10 describes the genealogy and dissemination of mankind after the new beginning, much as Gen. 4 does after the Creation
- Gen. 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel) described both the capability of mankind to do great things, but also its rebellion against God - much as Genesis 4 did
 - God brings judgment, but rather than destroying the earth, confuses & scatters mankind
 - reinforces the notion of the need for a New Creation with most lasting effects (i.e. that will not degenerate into rebellion against God)
- In the meantime, Gen. 11:10-32 returns to the genealogy of the lineage that God would call to Himself, culminating in Abraham --> similar to Gen. 5, culminating in Noah
 - > God continues His plan of redemption, in the face of mankind's rebellion
 - God continues to preserve a remnant through whom He will save the world
- sets the stage for the coming of the man through whom God would bless & redeem the world
 - wickedness is continuing to proliferate and spread, and the expectation is that God is once again going to deal with it
 - Abraham marks another new beginning (12:1-3)
 - but instead of destroying the whole world and saving only a handful (as in the days of Noah), now God is raising up someone through whom the whole world will be blessed --> pointing forward and eventually culminating in Jesus Christ!

For further reflection

In Genesis 9, we see the beginnings of a "new creation"... of sorts. After the Flood, Noah comes forth into a new world as a "new Adam". And yet, unlike the original Creation, this new world is not pronounced by God to be "very good". The Flood did not remove the taint of sin, and so the reality of death lurks in the background (9:4-6) even as God blesses and commissions Noah and His family (9:1-7). And like Adam, Noah soon experiences a "Fall" that results in a curse with lasting implications on generations to come (9:20-27). After Noah, mankind proliferates and spreads out over the earth (Gen. 10), but as mankind increases, so also does his pride and rebellion against God, as epitomized in the tower of Babel (11:1-4). In the face of all this, however, God is faithful to preserve a remnant - in the lineage of Shem (11:10-32) - through which He will save the world.

The account of Noah and the 'new' but fallen creation around him points to the need for greater 'new Adam' (Jesus Christ!) who will bring his people into a greater 'New Creation' - one that will no longer be marked by sin or subject to bondage to corruption. In Abram, we will see another new beginning - one that will lead ultimately to the greater New Creation that we need.

Spend some time reflecting on the reality that those who have believed in Christ are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17), and that He will one day make everything new (Rev. 21:1-5). How should we be reflecting this reality in the way we live our daily lives?

Additional Resources

CGYG/LIFE website: www.cgygfellowship.com (Resources section)

- Genesis Bible study series: http://www.cgygfellowship.com/BBS_Genesis.shtml
- OT Daily Devotional series

CGC website

- OT Survey and Genesis adult Christian education materials: <http://www.cgctorenglish.chinesegospelchurch.ca> (Resources section)