



Genesis 8:20—9:29 (James Krieg)

'I now establish my covenant with you.'

Noah stands on the face of the earth, in a sense, as another Adam: 'Creation Mark II'.

Life after the flood will be the same, but different.

Reiteration of the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

The dominion that humanity has over other living creatures will take on a new expression: 'Fear and dread'

Humanity must now wait for the day when,

⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. (Isaiah 22:6-8)

God graciously provides animals as food - placing humanity at the top of the food chain

Treating animals like humans means treating humans like animals

Humanity's status as the only creature made in the image of God.

The death penalty: originally designed to highlight the high value of God-given human life, by giving it the highest level of protection.

Verse 6 lays the foundation for the entirety of our human justice systems.
'How can this law help me to love my neighbour as myself?'

All of this is God's grace to a sinful human race. The flood was a picture of what should happen if God were to carry out His justice to the letter, and give humanity what is deserved. But it was grace that meant that Noah and his family were preserved - and that grace extends beyond the flood to the human race that is descended from them.

Grace never ignores or contradicts or overrules judgement; it is always either a postponing of judgement, or a diverting of judgement.

Common grace: when God withholds His judgement until a later date.
'Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?' (Ezekiel 18:23)

Special grace: when God permanently diverts his judgement from us. This is what He has done in the cross of Christ

Common grace is preemptive - it points us to the fullness of special grace in Jesus, and is always meant to lead us to take hold of it by faith. To live for a lifetime under God's common grace and to never take hold of special grace in Jesus is not only the greatest tragedy, but is also the greatest affront to God (Romans 2:4)

The grace of God - both in the common and the special sense - is demonstrated in the covenant.

The Noahic covenant - first mentioned in 6:18. The covenant was already in place before the flood, and both the flood itself and the saving of Noah and his family were part of the covenant.

Covenant is the word that sums up how God relates, and therefore how we as human beings in His image are designed to relate.

A relationship that is based on unconditional faithfulness to a promise.

A covenant may not even include the responsibilities of the other party. Eg 9:8-17

In other contexts a covenant spells out the obligations of both parties. Eg. marriage, God's covenant with Israel.

Contract: a relationship built not on faithfulness to a promise, but on mistrust.

God calls us as His people to live covenantally, not contractually, because that's how He relates to us.



The relationship between Father, Son and Spirit is covenantal.

The actions of the members of the Trinity: The Father sets in motion His plan to create and redeem; the Son obeys the Father in executing that plan by entering the creation and dying to save sinners; and the Holy Spirit applies the Son's accomplishments to bring about the fulfilment of the plan in the new creation.

The big covenants in the Bible: all a re-establishment of this one covenant of creation.

With each expression of the covenant the details become more specific

A general promise to preserve the whole earth...

A promise to make a great nation from Abraham and to bless all nations through him...

The choosing of Israel and the giving of law, worship and the promises of the Messiah...

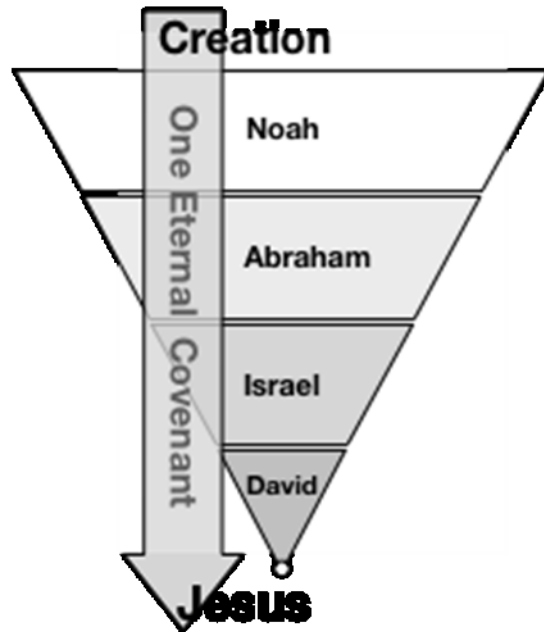
The specific promise to David will establish the kingdom of God forever...
Jesus who establishes the 'New Covenant' in his own blood at the cross.

Behind all of these the covenant of creation...

...behind this, the covenant between the Father, Son and Spirit.

Covenant relationship between God and us is meant to issue forth in covenant relationships with one another: loving our neighbour as ourselves.

We need to be constantly reminding ourselves of the nature of covenantal relationships, because our default setting as sinners is to always think in terms of contract. We see this in Noah's actions in his relationship with his three sons (20-27).



When Noah learns what happened and responds with anger, cursing Ham and favouring his brothers over him, he is acting contractually, not covenantally.

'Noah began to be a man of the soil,' ...like Cain who was 'a worker of the ground' (4:2)

We are just like Noah.

We may think contractually in our marriages, by reserving a list of things that if our spouse were to do or not do would absolve us from the responsibility to keep our promises to them - but marriage is based on promises, not on conditions.

We may think contractually as parents, by setting up certain worldly expectations for performance or achievement that are seen as more important than their identity as sons and daughters. But the parent-child relationship is a given - our children did not choose us, and we did not choose our children.

I think many Christians today think about church contractually instead of covenantally. It may be that we think of attendance at church as something we must do in order to maintain favour with God or to win the approval of others. Or it may be a consumer mentality that says, 'I will attend church as long as it provides for me the things that I want to get out of it'.

Seeing the cross: no longer have any doubt or question of what true covenantal love looks like.

We saw in God's covenant with Noah the bow in the sky aimed up at heaven - at the heart of God himself, promising judgement if He should ever break His word. In the cross we see that bow fired - not at us the covenant breakers, but at Himself, as in Christ he takes our place, diverting judgement from us in an act of special grace.

We now have another sign - the sign of that covenant secured, and ratified in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The bread and the wine are both a reminder of the judgement that came on Christ when he bore our sins in his body, and a reminder of the special grace He offers to us in the New Covenant.