

Genesis 8:1-9:29      “The New Creation”  
Psalm 8, 147  
2 Peter 3

April 26, 2009

Psalm 147 speaks of God’s power over creation.

In verses 16-18 it particularly speaks of God’s power over the waters.

As we have recently passed through a frigid winter,  
and now feel the “warm winds” of spring,  
we need to understand something about those warm winds.

The wind that Psalm 147:18 speaks of is the *ruach* of God.

God sends forth his *ruach* – his Spirit – and the frozen waters melt and flow.

Psalm 147 is reflecting on the creation narrative –

how the *ruach* (the Spirit) of God hovered over the waters in the beginning;  
but also how the *ruach* of God blew over the watery earth at the Flood.

Today, the *ruach* of God goes forth over the earth.

When you feel that warm spring air blowing across the face of the earth,  
bringing forth life in all the trees and plants,

you *must* understand that this is the work of God’s *ruach* – his Spirit.

For too long the church has accepted a “scientific” view of “nature”  
that only allows God to be the distant architect who occasionally  
“fills in the gaps” of what we cannot explain naturally.

As you walk out the door today – what you see is the work of God’s breath,  
not just because he created it by his Word long ago,  
but because he sends forth his Word and Spirit every spring  
to renew the earth.

All creation is involved in its annual dance of life and joy,  
as it responds to the call of its Maker.

And it is that same God who brings healing to the hearts of his people!

Do you not see?  
Can you not hear?

Let’s sing Psalm 147!  
Read 2 Peter 3

The earth was formed out of water and through water by the Word of God.

And by water God destroyed the earth.

Now by that same word God is going to bring fire upon the heavens and the earth.

It is instructive that the Flood did not touch the heavenly bodies.  
But the Fire will.

You might say (as Peter thought that some would say in his day!)  
that God seems slow to fulfill his promise.  
But this alleged slowness has to do with God's purpose in history.  
God's purpose is to save humanity.  
As Peter says it, "The Lord is ... not wishing that any should perish,  
but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Peter says that when you understand that you are not the center of history  
then that changes the way you live.  
If you were the center of history,  
then God would arrange everything for your comfort and well-being.  
But you are not the center of history.  
God's purpose is to bring a new heavens and a new earth  
through the fire of judgment –  
even as he once before prefigured this by water  
in the days of Noah.

And Peter's conclusion is that if this is the case,  
"what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness."  
When you realize that you are not the center of history,  
you humbly accept your own small place,  
amazed that God has been so gracious as to give you a bit part  
in the story of his beloved Son!

### **Introduction: The Structure of the Flood Narrative**

In your bulletin I have given you a couple of outlines  
that may help you see what is going on in the narrative.  
The first one shows you the chiasmic structure of the flood narrative.  
Genesis 7-8 are arranged around this numeric pattern.

7 days of waiting before the flood came (7:4)  
7 days of waiting mentioned again (7:10)  
40 days of flooding (7:17)  
150 days of water triumphing (7:24)  
150 days until water subsides (8:3) [same 150 days]  
40 days of waiting (8:6)  
7 days of waiting (8:10)  
7 additional days of waiting (8:12)

One thing that this does is highlight what is at the very center of the chiasm:  
verse 1 of chapter 8 –  
"But God remembered Noah."

We saw last time that water is both a blessing and a curse.

In moderate amounts and at the right times water is delightful!

Moses describes the Promised Land as a land

“which drinks water by the rain from heaven.”

And if Israel obeyed the voice of the LORD, Moses promised that the LORD

“will give the rain for your land in its season,

the early rain and the later rain,

that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.” (Dt 11:14)

But if Israel disobeyed and served other gods,

“then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you,

and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain,

and the land will yield no fruit,

and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.”

(Dt 11:17)

So water is a sign of God’s blessing.

And yet too much water – or water at the wrong time – is a terrible curse:

When Israel asked for a king,

the LORD demonstrated his anger against Israel by sending rain!

Why is that bad?

Well, as Samuel said,

“Is it not wheat harvest today?

I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain.

And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great,

which you have done in the sight of the Lord,

in asking for yourselves a king.”

So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day,

and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. (1 Samuel 12:17-18)

A torrential downpour in the middle of the harvest is *not* a good thing!

In the days of Noah God destroyed the earth with water –

a cosmic flood that brought down the waters above the heavens

destroying all flesh (both human and animal) upon the earth.

But, as we hear in 8:1, “God remembered Noah.”

Noah after all, was the one righteous man upon the earth.

Noah alone “walked with God.”

And so as humanity corrupted itself with its self-destructive ways,

God completed the destruction of humanity,

but saved Noah and his family, through water.

### **1. The Seven Phases of the New Creation (8:1-9:7)**

God remembered Noah.

Remembering and forgetting is not merely an intellectual act.

It is a covenantal act.

And when God remembers Noah, he remembers his covenant –  
he remembers what he had promised.

And you see the results in the new creation revealed in chapter 8 of Genesis.

Why do I call it a new creation?

Because Genesis 8 closely echoes Genesis 1 in the language of the seven days.

- 1) The Wind (Spirit) of God Blows (8:1)
- 2) The Waters Separated – Windows of Heaven Closed (8:2)
- 3) Dry Land Separated from the Waters (8:3-5)
- 4) [Heavenly bodies were not destroyed, so no new creation needed]
- 5) Birds return to the skies (8:6-12)
- 6) Animals and Man return to the earth (8:13-19)
- 7) Blessing of Man (8:20-9:7)

Look at the text of Genesis 8:

First, look at verse 1.

God made a wind (ruach – or Spirit) blow over the earth,  
just as the wind/Spirit of God had blown over the face of the deep.  
(There is no reference to “light and dark”  
because God did not “unmake” light – he unmade the earth!)

Second, look at verse 2.

On the second day God separated the waters above from the waters below.  
Now God closes the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven –  
once again separating the waters above from the waters below.

Third, look at verses 3-5.

On the third day God separated the dry land from the waters.  
Now God causes the waters to recede  
until the dry land is once more separated from the waters.

Fourth, there is no reference to the sun and moon,

because once again God did not unmake the heavenly bodies!

But it is interesting that in verse 6 we are told  
that Noah opened the window of the ark.

Especially if the ark is designed as a picture of the world,  
then the window of the ark in the third story of the ark,  
is parallel to the windows of the heavens  
which were closed in verse 2.

Fifth, look at verses 6-12.

On the fifth day God formed the sea creatures and the birds.  
Now, in verses 6-12, the birds return to fly across the face of the heavens  
(there is no need to speak of fish, since God did not destroy the seas –  
indeed, he destroyed the earth by means of the seas!)

Sixth, look at verses 13-19.

On the sixth day God formed the animals and man.  
Now, in verses 13-19, the animals and man are restored to the earth.

And on the seventh day God rested.

And even so, in 8:20-9:7

Noah, the one whom his father said would bring us rest!,  
offers burnt offerings to the LORD.

And God is pleased with the aroma of Noah's offerings,  
and so he promised that he would never again  
curse the ground because of man.

Why?

Because God has dealt with man's wickedness  
and so righteous Noah and his sons  
will now succeed where Adam failed?

No.

Why does God promise never to curse the ground again?  
*For the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

Think about it:

the only human beings left are Noah and his wife,  
and his sons and their wives.

The only people left are the righteous man and his family.

And yet, of this most righteous man who found favor in the eyes of the LORD,  
God says, "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."  
The most righteous man and his family still are bent toward evil.

There is something in you that is twisted.

I know that you try to be good!

And compared to other people you may be a downright "decent person."

But true goodness means that you love the LORD your God with all your heart  
*all the time* – without exception – in every situation!

And as God looks at humanity, *he says*,  
your intentions are evil from your youth.

You don't love me!

You are selfish!

You are corrupt – twisted – bent.

And so God says, "I will never again curse the ground because of man,  
because if I treat man as he deserves, then I would destroy them all.

And so God promises that he will continue the regularity of his creation for all of history.  
While the earth remains – until the day comes when he brings an end to this earth-

he will maintain the regularity of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
summer and winter, day and night.

And so in 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons with a blessing  
that echoes the blessing of Adam.

*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*

But instead of the peaceful dominion of creation,  
now, *the fear of you and the dread of you  
shall be upon every beast of the earth  
and upon every bird of the heavens,  
upon everything that creeps on the ground  
and all the fish of the sea.*

Once the animals had obeyed man.  
Now they fear man.

*Into your hand they are delivered.  
Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.  
And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.*

Some have said that before the Flood all humans were vegetarians.  
That is possible, but that is not what Genesis 9 says.

When did animals begin to fear man?  
Genesis 9 says that God is now delivering the animals into man's hand,  
and that now they will fear you.  
Does this mean that from Adam to Noah  
rebellious humanity continued to have peaceful dominion  
over the animals?

The fact that God codifies a law in Genesis 9 does not mean that it began here.  
Think about it this way,  
when does God first codify the law, "you shall not kill."  
Genesis 9:5-6.

Does this mean that murder was okay back in Genesis 4?  
Of course not!

It is likely that animals had feared man ever since the fall.  
It is likely that man had eaten animals at least since the fall  
(and possibly before it).

But the point of verses 2-3 is found in verse 4:  
*But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.*

The blood is the life of the animal.  
Sin can only be dealt with by the shedding of blood.  
Therefore eating blood would mean eating the life of the animal.

God's purpose is to show us that animal blood cannot bring life.  
The blood of animal sacrifices (and all animals eaten)  
is to be poured out upon the ground.

Indeed, it is only the blood of Jesus that brings life.  
This is why Jesus will utter his most shocking statement:  
"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,  
you have no life in you.  
Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."  
(John 6:53-54).

The Jews who heard him would have been shocked and horrified!  
We don't drink blood!  
The life is in the blood!  
But that, of course, was the point!  
Only the blood of Jesus can bring life to our mortal flesh!

But notice that the prohibition against eating blood did not come from Moses.  
It came from Noah.  
Ever since the Flood God has forbidden man to eat meat with blood.  
This prohibition was reinforced in the NT with the Jerusalem Council  
in Acts 15.  
In Acts 15 the apostles and elders decided that Gentiles  
should not be forced to become Jews –  
they did not need to observe the law of Moses –  
but rather Gentile Christians should observe the Noahic statutes.

And the decision of the Jerusalem Council remains in force.  
No descendent of Noah should eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

This is *not* the same thing as saying that we should observe Jewish kosher laws.  
If you know anything about the slaughterhouse,  
you know that it is not possible to extract every single blood cell  
from an animal.  
So you don't need to worry about that steak you got from the butcher!  
Modern slaughterhouses do a reasonable job of draining the blood.

There have been those who have said that Paul lifts this restriction in 1 Corinthians,  
but nowhere in the whole of scripture is there the slightest suggestion  
that it is now okay to eat blood.  
And since Acts 15 plainly commands Gentiles to abstain from blood,  
there really should be no debate.

The importance of blood is revealed in verses 5-6

*And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning:  
from every beast I will require it and from man.  
From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.*

*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,  
for God made man in his own image.*

In other words, God commands all nations to treat murder as a capital crime.  
The death penalty is commanded by God.

After all, as we saw a few weeks ago,  
murder is an attempt to strike back at God.  
And here in verse 6 God says as much:  
God made man in his own image,  
and so anyone who sheds the blood of man  
is striking at the life of God.

Ultimately, this is why the death penalty should be carried out against murderers.  
Yes, the death penalty can be effective as a deterrent,  
and it works effectively as a punishment for murder!  
But the rationale is ultimately rooted in the fact that murder  
is an attempt to strike down God.

It is not because life is “sacred” –  
(if that was the case, then the death penalty would be wrong!)  
it is rather that God is sacred.

*But you (plural – Noah and his sons), be fruitful and multiply,  
teem on the earth and multiply in it.*

Once again God repeats his command to be fruitful and multiply.  
Even after the fall,  
even after the dominion of man has become a contested dominion,  
full of fear and contention,  
it is still a good thing, a blessed thing, to have children.

## **2. The New Covenant (9:8-17)**

And having blessed Noah and his sons,  
God then goes on to reaffirm his covenant.  
I know that your translation says “I establish my covenant”  
but this word “establish” does not mean “make.”  
When God makes a covenant-when he initiates a covenant-  
he uses a different word (“to cut a covenant”).  
So when God says that he is “establishing” his covenant with Noah and his sons,  
he is saying that he is “making it stand” or “confirming” his covenant.

This is why the “confirming” or “establishing” of God’s covenant with Noah is really the reaffirmation of his covenant.

This is one reason why we view God’s relationship with Adam as a covenantal relation. God’s covenant with Noah is a new covenant (in one respect), but in another way it is simply a new application of the Adamic covenant.

And this covenant is established with all creatures (not just man). While God’s central concern is for man, all of his creatures are included in this “common grace” covenant. The covenant with Noah is a reminder that all of creation is in covenant with God. And man is simply God’s steward, God’s vicegerent, who must give an account to God of what he has done with God’s creation!

One of the great tragedies of the rise of modern humanism has been that first we viewed science as a way to get the most out of the earth, and so we forgot that we were stewards, and instead treated the earth as our private property. And then, not surprisingly, when that resulted in the destruction of creation, we overreacted with a postmodern pantheism that deified nature and treated earth as our mother!

God’s covenant with Noah, he says,  
*is for every beast of the earth* (v10).

God’s purpose in this covenant is to protect all his creatures – not just man!  
Indeed, “every living creature” is repeated five times in verses 10-17, and “all flesh” is repeated five times in verses 10-17, clearly showing that God’s concern in the Noahic Covenant includes “all flesh” – every living creature – not just man!

*11 I establish my covenant with you,  
that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood,  
and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”*

Remember that Hebrew uses one word for “the Flood” and another word for “ordinary” floods. Here God promises that the waters of the cosmic flood will never again be let loose. And never again will there be a cosmic flood to destroy the earth.

*12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you,  
for all future generations:*

*13 I have set my bow in the cloud,  
and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.  
14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,  
15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you  
and every living creature of all flesh.  
And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.  
16 When the bow is in the clouds,  
I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant  
between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”  
17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me  
and all flesh that is on the earth.”*

The ESV thankfully translates “bow” properly.  
Too many translations have called it a “rainbow” –  
but in Hebrew it is simply the word “bow.”

Why does God choose the bow?  
(And obviously, he does mean the rainbow!)

Because the rainbow looks like a bow!  
There are three possibilities as to why,  
and all three are true!

First, the rainbow points toward heaven,  
and thus serves as a sort of self-maledictory oath.  
God is saying, in effect, may I be shot with an arrow  
before a cosmic ever comes on the earth again!

But second, the rainbow is empty.  
There is no arrow on the string.  
And thus the rainbow is like a bow that has been hung on the wall –  
God is saying that he is no longer at war with man.

And third, the rainbow is *always* an unbroken bow.  
There are no windows in a rainbow!  
The rainbow reminds us that God will never again  
open the windows of heaven in judgment.

Some people think that you have to choose one.  
But why?

God simply says that when he sees it he will remember his covenant  
that he will never again destroy the world with a cosmic flood.

There may be literally hundreds of reasons why the rainbow reminds God of this!  
Why should we think that God is limited to only one!

And even so, when *we* see the rainbow,  
    we are reminded that God will not destroy the earth by water.  
And when *we* see the rainbow,  
    we are reminded of our baptism,  
        how God destroyed the earth by the cosmic Flood,  
        and yet by those same waters he delivered Noah and his family.  
And even so our Lord Jesus Christ was brought through the waters of judgment  
    and has been raised up from the dead in his resurrection.

Let us pray.