**Lesson 10**

**9, 10 August 2021**

**Genesis 8:15 – 9:29**

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Creation* video #9, “God’s Covenant with Noah”, part 1**

**Review** – Last week we saw how God brought Noah through the great flood. There were six increments of time in which God returned the earth to its primordial state and then “recreated” it. So the six increments of time in the flood narrative correspond to the six days of the original creation.

**Dealing with Uncomfortable Accounts in the Old Testament** – When people avoid the Old Testament, it is usually because of stories like the one we will discuss today. They find it difficult to reconcile what they see of God in the Old Testament with our New Testament idea of Him. One modern example may help. On August 6, 1945, the US government made the decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later they dropped another one on Nagasaki. There was massive loss of human life, and it must have been tremendously difficult to make that terrible, terrible decision. The decision was made by limited humans who had some of the facts, but certainly not all of the facts. The reason they decided to do what they did was that they believed that this terrible act would prevent even greater terrible acts from happening. We see a similar thing happening in the flood narrative. But remember that the One who decides to send the flood is *not* a limited human; He does *not* possess limited knowledge; He has *no* potentially evil ulterior motive. He is infinitely good, He holds all knowledge, He is sovereign, and He always does what is best.

We feel uncomfortable with the account of God’s judgment in the flood because we lose sight of the fact that *no one* dies in the flood who would have repented later if they had only had more time. We think, “Oh, if He had only waited a little bit longer!” But as we saw before, God did wait a very long time. He is slow to anger.

**Noah’s Sacrifice** – When Noah stepped off the ark into a world that was vastly different from what he had last seen, he had to deal with the massive destruction that had taken place. He also had to deal with the loss of extended family members who died in the flood. We find him standing symbolically in the “seventh day” of this recreation account. There are only seven other people who can help him rebuild and to restart humanity. It is incredible that Noah’s first act on exiting the ark is to worship God. On the seventh day, the day of sabbath, he ceases the work of survival, and he takes up the true work of worship.

If we compare what Noah sacrificed with the later Levitical laws, we see that what he offered was a *sin offering*. So he walks off the ark and offers a sacrifice to atone for his personal sin. He knew that he still carried within himself a desire to sin, so his first act of worship is to repent of his own personal sin.

**Always, Never, Etc.** – There are a number of superlatives given at the end of chapter eight. There are things that God says He will *never* do again, and He implies that He will *always* be faithful. This is in strong contrast to the only superlative used of men, and that is that *every* thought and inclination of their hearts is toward evil.

**Cultural Mandate Renewed and Revised** – Chapter 9:1, 2 are very reminiscent of the creation account. But notice that God now gives animals as food for people (verse 3), with some restrictions (verse 4).

**Lifeblood** – In Genesis 9:4-6, we see an emphasis on the significance of shedding blood. Both man and beast are to die if they kill a *person*. The importance of this concept will continue throughout the rest of Scripture. But what will man have to do now to get food, now that God is giving him animals to eat? He will have to *shed blood*. **God is using this fact to heighten their awareness that in order for humans to live, blood must be shed.** Leviticus 17:14 says, “For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore…you shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.”

This prohibition against eating blood was very significant to the Israelites who first heard this message. They were about to enter Canaan, and one vile practice and belief of the Canaanites was drinking the blood of a wild animal to acquire its life force. They believed that drinking blood would give you some spiritual amplification of who you are.

Verse 6 is a three-part statement: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” The fact that humans are image-bearers makes human life sacred.

**Prototype of Government** – The rules set out for Noah in verses 5 and 6 give him guidelines. It is a kind of law code for this new post-flood era, before the fuller statement of the law would be given in Moses’ time. It is intended to do two things: 1) It will prevent the spread of sin. And 2) it will prevent over punishment, such as Lamech dealt out to the young man who offended him. God is giving Noah a way to govern that will combine mercy with judgment and makes sure that the penalty fits the crime and does not exceed it.

**Covenant** – In Genesis 9:9-17 God repeats the word “covenant” seven times. He says over and over again that He will *never* again flood the earth and wipe everything out. Why say it so many times? It was probably to reassure Noah and his family when they would see dark storm clouds in the future. Rain may come, but it will never be anything like the torrential rainfall of the flood. Rainfall would be a source of fear for them, so they needed strong reassurance.

The covenant that God established with Noah was *unilateral*. He alone established it. It is set *on His terms*. It is *eternal*. It will endure according to His character for however long He determines. And God’s covenant is *gracious*, undeserved by its recipients.

**The Sign of the Covenant** – Notice that God didn’t just *tell* Noah that there would never again be a flood to wipe out the earth, He gave him a physical sign: the rainbow. Why a rainbow? Think about the two elements that are needed to form a rainbow: rain storm and sunlight. Think about how Jesus refers to Himself in the New Testament. In John 8:12 He says, “I am the Light of the world.” If we were to stare at a bright light, all we would see is white light. But put that light through a prism, and we would see a rainbow. Similarly, we tend to think of God in very general terms. But when we hit a “rain storm” or a trial, all the beauty that is tied up in His light gets refracted for us. We see the “blue” of His holiness; the “purple” of His sovereignty; the “gold” of His royalty; the “green” of His eternality; and the “red” of His mercy. We see Him in a deeper and richer and broader way than we would otherwise.

**Rainbow versus Bow** – When we read verses 13 and 14, where God says, “I have set my bow in the clouds,” we think, “Oh, that’s the rainbow!” But God is speaking terms of a *weapon*, e.g. like a bow and arrow. So He is saying that He has laid down His weapon; He is disarming Himself; He is acting in peace toward Noah.

**The Shadow of a Greater Reality** – This story is just the shadow of a much greater story that will happen much later in human history. Several thousand years later another flood of wrath would be poured out by God. But this time, instead of being poured out on all humanity, it would fall upon Jesus Christ. And because God’s wrath was poured out on Him, it was diverted from you and me. So any time you look at the cross, you can remember, “Never again!” The wrath of God will never be directed at those who are in Christ because that wrath has been spent. *“It is finished!”*

**TAKE AWAYS:**

*There are two quotes from Bible Study Fellowship that relate well with what Jen Wilkin taught in this session. Both come from page 5 of their Lesson 6 on Genesis. They also had another doctrinal statement that I thought worth sharing. That appears on the back of this page.*

* Seven days of waiting: “We do not naturally enjoy waiting. Even steps of obedience to God often involve waiting. **God is at work as we wait…**Waiting on God to bring the full answer to His promises **develops your faith**. What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for a clear answer, a firm decision, a release or solution? Can you trust that God remembers you, even while you wait? Can you praise God, even if you cannot see His answer? God can be trusted.”
* **God takes us beyond the comfortable and familiar, sometimes removing all options except trusting Him.**

**The Doctrine of Faith**

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith: *“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”* True faith places confidence in God’s character and offers assurance that He will do what He has promised. **Salvation comes as a gift of God, by grace through faith, not from ourselves.** We have no reason to boast (Ephesians 2:8-10). God gives people the gift of faith that leads them to repent of sin and trust in the sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Saving faith requires humility regarding self and reverence toward God. *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who come to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6)

**God the Holy Spirit graciously gives sinners saving faith.** No one can do anything to earn or deserve this gift. **Saving faith involves three elements:**

* **Content** – specific belief in the claims of the gospel for salvation (John 1:12; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31) Noah believed what God had promised. He believed what God had revealed at that point in redemptive history about sin, judgment, salvation and hope for new life.
* Personal, loving **trust** in Jesus Christ, the Savior, who first loved us (John 6:37; 1 John 4:9, 10). In Noah’s day, the promised Savior was yet to come. Yet Noah believed God’s promise to save His followers from sin and judgment. God declared Noah righteous through faith. Noah’s worship pleased God, and their relationship confirmed Noah’s personal trust.
* Commitment to **repent and follow** Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23; Luke 14:25-27; Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21; Romans 12:1-2). God’s covenant with Noah looked forward to the future person and work of Jesus Christ. Noah demonstrated that He accepted and applied God’s Word by building and entering the ark. But Noah and his family were saved from the Flood by God, not Noah’s efforts. God shut Noah safely in the ark, saving him from death and giving him new life through faith, another picture of Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews commended Noah for living by faith. Noah believed God and obeyed God in “holy fear” (Hebrews 11:7). **A life of obedience and worship gives evidence of saving faith.** Mere intellectual agreement to the gospel does not bring salvation. The demons have this kind of faith but are not saved. To know *about* Jesus is not the same thing as to enjoy personal relationship with Him (John 14:21-24; 1 John 1:5-10; 2 John 1:6). Biblical faith trusts God’s faithfulness and promises even when we do not understand all He is doing.

Faith in anything but God can lead to pride and prejudice against others. **Without faith in God alone, you have no choice but to rely on your own logic, personal experiences and human explanations to find meaning in this world and in this life.** Your search for freedom, fulfillment, and answers is limited to the people, places, things and pleasures of this world. How do you expect your career, hobbies, intellect, friends or marriage to satisfy your deep longings?

True faith in God changes everything in this life and for eternity. When I trust completely in the finished work of Christ, I can stop expecting that I can please God merely by managing my behavior and trying to be good. My desire and ability to please God depends on His power, not my own. I can rest, knowing my salvation is not something I can earn or mess up. My life has purpose because I know God loves with an everlasting love. Life on earth is not a meaningless journey, but the first steps toward a joyful eternity in the presence of my Creator. Believing God puts me in a safe place. He knows completely what I know only in part. God is worthy of my complete trust. **Faith can grasp what the mind cannot fully explain.**