

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 9:2-17

“The First Covenant”

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Verses 2-7

The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. ³ Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

⁴ But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

*⁶ Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made mankind.*

⁷ As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

- In Genesis 9:1, God began to speak a benediction, a departing blessing, over Noah, Noah's family, and all the animals who were with Noah on the Ark. God's blessing begins (verse 1) and ends (verse 7) with the same words, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.” God's intention for the earth and all living things is the continuation of life.
- God puts fear between the animals and humans. In the ark, the fear between humans and animals stopped so that Noah and his family could care for the animals. As they leave the ark that fear returns.
- Humans will continue to have dominance over the other creatures in the after-the-flood world just as they did before the flood. But now the human diet may include meat as well as plants. Prior to the flood humans only ate plants.

- But the meat eaten by humans must be drained of blood before it is eaten. Eating or drinking blood is expressly forbidden by God. God will demand an accounting of blood from every man and every animal. If a man kills an animal, he will be responsible for how he handles the animal's blood. If an animal kills a man, God will hold the animal responsible for spilling human blood irresponsibly. Taking life is a serious thing in the eyes of God. To God, ALL LIFE IS SACRED!
- If a human kills another human, that person is to die. Taking any life is a serious thing to God. But humans are made in the image of God. To take human life is to mar the image of God in another human and to offend God who created that person. Human life is sacred in the eyes of God.

Verses 8-11

⁸ *Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”*

- Our God rules by covenants, contracts, which he imposes on Himself and declares to His people. There are seven covenants or contracts given by God in the Bible; The Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:8-17), The First Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:9-21), The Second Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17), The Sinaitic Covenant (Exodus 19-24), The Phinehas Covenant (Numbers 25:10-13), The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:5-16), and the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Here God gives the first covenant.
- This covenant is given to all living creatures. In it, God promises that He will never again destroy the earth by the waters of a great universal flood. It is a binding and everlasting promise. There will never be another universal flood.

Verses 12-17

¹² *And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between*

me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” ¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

- God “signs” the covenant in a great and very obvious way. He puts a rainbow in the sky as the sign of His promise. Whenever He chooses, God will make the rainbow appear to remind all creatures, even Himself, of this promise.
- The covenant is given by God as an act of God. He has established it. He is under no obligation to offer the promise. It is an act of God’s grace. Because God is faithful, this promise is trustworthy and true!

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