

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, September 16, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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The Value & Protection of Human Life

In chapters 6-8 of Genesis, we read of the complete destruction of all life--including human life--that was on the surface of the earth by flood. This, as was made abundantly clear, was the just judgment of a holy Creator God because "all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Genesis 6:12).¹ But God provided grace in that He preserved Noah and his family, along with all living things that were in the ark, because "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (v. 8). All of human life today is descended from the eight people who came out of the ark; and stands as living proof that, even in judgment, God is a God of great grace.

And this brings us to Genesis 9:1-7--a very important passage in the construction of a biblical worldview. It tells us the story of God's instructions to the eight-person population of humanity immediately after the world-wide destruction of the flood. Remarkably--even after having justly brought dreadful judgment upon it in its wickedness--God still demonstrated that He loved and valued humanity. In this passage then, we see something further of God's grace through His expressed value and protection of Mankind.

We see, for example, that . . .

1. HUMANKIND IS COMMANDED AGAIN TO MULTIPLY (v. 1, 7).

A. In the story of creation, Genesis 1:28 contains God's original mandate to the first man and the first woman to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it . . ." And this mandate, given long before the flood, was not set aside after the flood. Properly speaking, it was not a new mandate that was given in Genesis 9; but rather--because it was still given to the offspring of Adam and Eve, and to those who were made in the image of God (v. 6)--it is best to see it as the old mandate renewed. "So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth'" (v. 1). In fact, it is given twice in this passage: "And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it" (v. 7).

B. Note that, in both Genesis 1:28 and 9:1, the mandate to multiply and fill the earth is preceded by the phrase, "And God blessed . . ." Even though Mankind had fallen, and even though Mankind's sin was so great as to necessitate the judgment of its almost complete destruction before the face of a holy God, God still loved--and still today loves--Mankind and desires to bless the people He has made. We might be inclined to think that, after all the terrible judgment of the flood, God would consider humanity unworthy of His love. And indeed it is unworthy! But God displays His grace in that He still blessed Mankind, and still commanded Mankind to multiply.

2. HUMANKIND'S DOMINION IS AGAIN ESTABLISHED (vv. 2-4).

A. Some things are kept the same after the flood as they were before. But there are also some things that are different. One thing that is the same is that Mankind still has "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth(see Genesis 1:28; also v. 26). But now, a few things that are different in humanity's relation to the animal life. Genesis 9:2 tells us, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth,

and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.” It may have been that, before the flood, there was a perfectly amicable relationship between humankind and animal life--perhaps because of a built-in regard for Mankind’s dominion role. But now, the relationship would--for the most part--be one of fear and dread. This may have been to underscore Mankind’s uniqueness over all other living things that came out of the ark. Man now has to tame and domesticate the animals whereas--before the flood--he may not have had to at all.

- B. Another thing that has changed is how Mankind may now make use of animal life. In verse 2, God told Noah and his sons, “They are given into your hand.” This may be a general statement of dominion; but it may also be understood with regard to the allowance made in the next verse. Back in Genesis 1:29-30, God told Adam and Eve, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.” But now, in 9:3, Noah and his sons are told, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.” It may be that Mankind needed this provision in order to survive after the flood. And it may have been also a provision to protect Mankind from being overwhelmed by the animal population. But more likely, God wanted to show the great superiority of human life over that of the animals. People today are, of course, free to refrain from eating meat if they wish (see Romans 14:2-3); and this freedom must be respected by all. What’s more, humane treatment of animals is always to be maintained. But because of God’s enduring provision to Noah in verse 3, the eating of meat cannot be forbidden out of a misguided ethic that equates animal life with human life in value.
- C. Later, in the Mosaic law, the flesh of certain animals would be forbidden as unclean to the Jews (see Leviticus 11). And this prohibition would later be removed in Acts 10. But here, the only prohibition given is concerning the blood of the animal: “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (v. 4). The blood must be drained because it represents life. This principle would be later retained in the law given to Moses (Leviticus 17:11), would stand as the basis of atonement (Hebrews 9:22), and would be exhorted of the Gentile believers in gracious respect to the Jews (Acts 15:19-21, 28-29).

3. GOVERNMENT IS GIVEN BY GOD FOR MAN’S GOOD (vv. 5-6).

- A. Another “new” thing that is introduced is God’s commandment concerning the murder of human life. Murder, of course, had already become a sad reality of human existence (see Genesis 4). But now God makes it clear that “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it . . .” (v. 5a). In other words, the shedding of human blood is not to be equated with the shedding of animal blood; but must be treated differently. Man may shed animal blood--and must pour it out if the animal is to be eaten. But should an animal shed the blood of a man, God would “require” it from the “hand of every beast” (implying the death of that animal; see Exodus 21:28). This underscores the uniqueness and sacredness of human life.
- B. And note the vital provision that God makes for the ongoing protection and value of human life. God goes on to say that this same penalty would be required, “. . . from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his

blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (vv. 5b-6). Most students of the Bible recognize this as God’s establishment of the provision of human government; because the right of a civil authority to execute a murderer also implies the right to make laws that may be necessary to protect human life from loss (see Deuteronomy 22:8 as an example).

- C. Capital punishment does not appear to necessarily have been administered in all cases. Cain, of course, was not executed before the flood. And afterwards, God did not require the execution of Moses for his act of murderer. Nor was David put to death for his murder of Bathsheba’s husband. Human courts can take all things into account and decide on mercy. But because human government is a provision from God, and because it is based on the timeless principle of God’s image in Man in both Genesis 1:26 and 9:6, capital punishment--in and of itself--cannot be considered an evil today. It is morally incorrect to refer to the civil execution of a murderer by the name “murder”. Rulers who make ‘just and ‘equitable’ use the sword as “ministers of God” in genuine cases of murder do so legitimately (see Romans 13:1-7)--and reflect the inherent value of human beings as truly ‘made in God’s image’.

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.