

The Noahic Covenant of Life (Genesis 9:1–17)
Grace Chapel February 6, 2008 Dr. John Niemelä

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF GENESIS

FLOW OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Toledot 1): 1:1–2:3: God formed (days 1–3) so He could fill the earth with light and life (days 4–6) and He rested, because creation was done (day 7)

Toledot 2: 2:4–4:26 (Day 6ff.) God’s evaluation of creation (after forming Adam) was, “Not Good that man should be alone,” but then He created the woman so the earth could be filled with people, but humanity fell into death while the woman was in her first pregnancy & that child murdered his brother before spawning a lineage

Toledot 3: 5:1–6:8 All of Adam’s descendants died, except Enoch who walked with God, then demons began procreating with humans (in an attempt to destroy humanity, but Noah found grace in God’s eyes

Toledot 4: 6:9–9:29 (Part 1: 6:9–9:17): God used the universal flood to judge humanity which had become corrupt and violent, but delivered Noah and his immediate family to start over in repopulating the earth (with which God covenanted not to flood, but to provide for creation to procreate and to exact penalty for encroaching on God’s domain of taking human life.

STRUCTURE OF THE FLOOD (adapted from Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*)

Introduction: Noah’s righteousness and Noah’s sons (6:9–10)

A God resolves to destroy the corrupt race (6:11–13)

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B Noah builds an ark according to God’s instructions (6:14–22)

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C God commands the remnant to enter the ark (7:1–9)

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D The flood begins (7:10–16)

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E The flood prevails 150 days, and the mountains are covered (7:17–24)

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F God remembers Noah (8:1a)

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E’ The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible (8:1b–5)

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D’ The earth dries (8:6–14)

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C’ God commands the remnant to leave the ark (8:15–19)

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B’ Noah builds an altar (8:20)

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A’ God resolves not to destroy humankind (8:21–22)

REVIEW:

6:9–22 Noah was righteous, but the rest of humanity was corrupted and violent, so God told Noah to build an ark to deliver 8 people and selected birds and animals

7:1–24 Noah, his family, and selected animals obediently entered the ark and were safely shut inside by God, but the waters prevailed on the earth, so everything outside died

8:1–22 God remembered Noah and those in the ark and caused the waters to start receding; after the ark rested in the mountains of Ararat Noah tested earth's habitability by releasing birds before leaving the ark; God accepted Noah's thanksgiving sacrifice and resolved never to flood the earth

EXPOSITIONAL SUMMARY:

- A 8:21 God promised never to destroy humanity (with a flood) despite man's evil**
- B 8:22 God blesses humanity with provision for being fruitful and multiplying**
- B' 9:1–7 God blessed Noah (as He had blessed Adam), commanding man to be fruitful & multiply; not to destroy man (created in God's image).**
- A' 9:8–17 God covenants with humanity not to bring a universal flood, but guarantees the covenant with the rainbow as a sign (to God and to man) that He will keep His word**

EXPOSITION:

9:1–7 God blessed Noah (as He had blessed Adam), commanding man to be fruitful & multiply; not to destroy man (created in God’s image).

9:1 God blessed Noah as He had blessed Adam & commanded Noah & his sons to be fruitful & multiply

9:2–3 God permitted people to eat of all living things, as He had permitted eating of plant life

9:4 God prohibited eating the lifeblood of living things

The word for life is *nephesh* (often translated *soul*)

The Bible often uses *soul* in *metonymy of cause*.

*Metonymy of cause: a thing is placed for what it produces,
e.g., soul is put for life.*

Luke 16:29: *Moses* is put for *what Moses wrote*

2 Samuel 14:19 *hand* is put for *counsel*

Leviticus 26:6 *sword* is put for *war*

Exodus 4:19 *soul* is put for *life*

Cf. Genesis 37:21 (Let us not kill his *nephesh*); Judges 9:17 (risked his *nephesh*); 1 Samuel 26:21 (my *nephesh* was precious to you); 1 Kings 2:23 (spoken this word against his own *nephesh*), etc.

Jehovah’s Witnesses miss the point. Their prohibition of blood transfusions assumes that a person would eat his own soul. Instead, the passage speaks of the loss of life when one loses blood through a wound.

9:5 Murder of a human is punishable by the loss of life (*nephesh*)

God does not identify the agent who will put the offender to death, but God does (at times) utilize human agency (e.g., government) to execute the death penalty. He also executes it Himself (at times).

The provision of capital punishment is a means by which God prevents an evil humanity from going “out-of-control” (as before the flood)

9:6 The reason murder of a human is punishable by the loss of life is because God created man in His image

Observe that (even after the fall) man remains in the image of God

Where does *the image of God* reside in man?

9:7 God repeats the instruction for them to be fruitful and multiply

Question: What is God’s view of the value of life?

9:8–17 God covenants with humanity not to bring a universal flood, but guarantees the covenant with the rainbow as a sign (to God and to man) that He will keep His word

9:8–11 God covenants (unconditionally) with man never to destroy humanity with a (universal) flood

9:12–17 God guarantees the covenant with the rainbow as a sign that He will keep His word

Even though Genesis 8:21 affirms that man is evil, God requires no conditions from man before unconditionally promising this covenant

God, at various points in human history, has offered signs to verify that He has spoken.

CONCLUSION