

## Group Study Outline

### LAUNCH QUESTION

If you took 8 people to Mars and started again, what would happen? Why?  
*That's a little bit like what God does in today's passage...*

Can somebody tell us the story so far?

### READ Genesis 8:20-9:29

### QUESTIONS

Where do we get hints that Noah is in a fantastic 'new creation' of sorts?  
How is this post-flood world different to before? In what ways is it the same?

What does 8:21 tell us about people's hearts?  
Do you agree with this assessment of the human heart?  
Why is this such a problem? (cf 5:5-7)

How do we know God won't just respond to sin by flooding the world again?  
Who is this covenant with?  
What sign does God give to visualise the covenant?  
What's the significance of a 'bow'? Is that how we normally think of rainbows?  
Why is this covenant such a relief?  
But where do we see hints that this *isn't* a promise never to judge sin again?  
What *is* it a promise never to do?

*Have someone READ 2 Peter 3:1-9 [don't spend too long on this section]*

What does Peter tell us will happen in the future?  
How is it similar to what happened with Noah? How is it different?  
How are we told some people will react to the delay?  
Do we see that reaction today?  
Do we ever react like that? What might this look like for us?

*Back to Genesis 9:18-29*

What does Noah do wrong?  
Why is this so disappointing?  
What does Ham do wrong?  
How does Noah respond?  
Why do you think people normally skip these bits of the story?  
What do we miss when we do?

How can Noah be listed as a model believer in Hebrews 11 after what he did?  
What do Shem and Japheth do differently to what Ham did?  
In what way is Shem a picture of Jesus?  
Do you think God likes to shame us? Or to cover our sin?  
Are their sins *you* need to ask God to cover over?

How does this whole story underline the seriousness of sin?  
How does this story show us God's graciousness?  
In the run-up to *A Passion For Life*, how does this story convince us to tell others about Jesus? Who do *you* know who needs to know?

### PRAY

# Genesis 8:20-9:29



### Genesis 1-12 at a glance

God is the creator of everything and the giver of every blessing. He created humanity as an image of Himself to rule the world under Him. Life with God in a perfect world forever was the wonderful intention of God.

However, humanity rebelled against God. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to cross the one boundary God had set up, to take God's place in deciding for themselves what was right and wrong. As soon as they sinned, they realised they were naked and exposed before God, so they hid.

God responded to their sin as He said He would, by bringing curse and death into the world as punishment. The relationships between men and women, as well as between humanity and creation would be strained. The serpent too was cursed, in particular with a promise (3:15) that one of Eve's offspring would be hurt by Satan, but in the process stamp on his head. Humans were banished from the presence of God.

The story then follows humanity outside the garden, waiting for this offspring to come. We have many disappointments as the promised son fails to materialize. But God continues to bless and to keep His promises.

As humanity spreads out, so their sin increases and God decides to judge the world with a flood. But He graciously saves one small family to begin again.

Humanity would spread out once again and sin yet again, causing God to scatter people and confuse their language – a terrible judgment but nothing like as severe as the flood, which He'd promised not to use again.

The descendants of Adam continue until Abram is born. God makes it very clear that Abraham's family is *the* family to watch, and His promises get even more specific about many people (not just one), living back in God's place and experiencing His blessing as before.

Throughout the story we see that Jesus is that promised offspring and all these stories find their ultimate fulfillment in Him and His finished work.

### Theme Sentence for Genesis 8:20-9:29

Creation is spoilt by sin again but God promises to be gracious.

### Application

- Understand the seriousness of sin and its implications
- Appreciate God's gracious response to our sin (Shem prefiguring Christ)
- Trust in Christ to cover our sin and shame
- In the run up to *A Passion For Life*, to tell others of this great news

[NB]

## **Commentary** [these notes follow the outline of the 09 March 2014 sermon at Emmanuel]

### ***a new creation...***

In 6:6, because of people's sin, God wished He'd never made the world. And so He decided to unmake it, using the flood to take the earth back to the watery wasteland of 1:2. Now Noah steps off the ark into a sort of new creation. There are lots of echoes of the first creation story. Adam's descendant (with 3 sons) in a world newly emerged from water. The command to be fruitful and multiply. Lists of animals. The giving of food with one prohibition (not plants with one tree not to eat, but animals with blood not to eat). Mankind in the image of God. It's a fantastic new start.

### ***...but an old problem***

The reason for the flood was the sinfulness of the human heart (6:5) and 8:21 shows this problem hasn't gone away – "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth." This new creation isn't quite the return to Eden we might like. Noah still has dominion over the animals, but now they would be afraid of him (9:2), much like Adam and Eve hid from God (3:8). Before the flood, Cain killed his brother Abel. After the flood, God needs to set up sanctions for when murder inevitably happens again (9:5-6).

The remaining problem of sin means we need reassurances that the flood won't happen again (and again and again). And that's exactly what we get...

### ***a new covenant...***

The word 'covenant' comes up 7 times in 9:9-17 so it's clearly a big theme! A covenant is a special relationship based on promises. This covenant is between God and all creation for all time (9:12). The promise is never again to destroy the earth with a flood (9:11). So every morning we wake up and whole world isn't underwater, that's God being gracious and keeping this covenant promise.

Like all covenants, there is a sign to go with it; a reminder and symbol of that commitment, much like a ring in marriage. Here the covenant sign is the rainbow (9:12).

Often we think of fluffy unicorns and children's TV shows when we think of rainbows, but the 'bow' in 'rainbow' isn't a pretty bow in a little girl's hair – it's a deadly bow and arrow. Before the flood, we saw Methuselah's name meant "at his death it will shoot". The flood was God shooting down judgment, executing humanity by firing squad. But now God hangs up His bow. No longer is it loaded and pointing down at us, it's safe in the clouds where we can see it. Although it's not really there for *our* benefit, but God's. It's a reminder to *Him* (9:14-15) so that when He sees human sin and rightly wants to destroy humanity again, He remembers His promise not to do it.

### ***...but a lingering threat***

However, we mustn't put too much emphasis on this covenant as if it means God will never destroy the world again. The promise is never to destroy the world again *with a flood!* The promise in 8:22 that "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" begins with the ominous phrase "while the earth remains." It won't remain forever.

2 Peter 3:6-7 talks about Noah's flood and says, "the world that then existed was deluged with water & perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that *now* exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment & destruction of the ungodly." God's bow isn't snapped in half or in the bin; it's hung up within arm's reach, like a gun over the fireplace. It's ready to be brought out of retirement for one last job. The rainbow is a reminder that judgment is being postponed, not cancelled.

### ***a new catastrophe...***

We've seen a new creation just like Genesis 1 and 2, but sadly Genesis 3 came next. And so too, we get another Fall here, not with food this time but drink. Noah (like Adam) becomes a farmer and plants a vineyard. He gets drunk and passes out naked in his tent. Psalm 104:15 tells us God has given us "wine to gladden the heart of man", so there's nothing wrong with wine per se. But Noah takes that good gift and misuses it. Drinking is fine; getting drunk is sin.

It's so disappointing! In 5:29, Noah was supposed to be the hope of the world, the son who would undo the curse. But instead he takes the forbidden fruit to another level; fermenting it and drinking it and losing control.

But then it gets worse! Noah's son Ham sees Noah's nakedness and tells his brothers. Leviticus 18:7 says, "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father," which from the context appears to be a prohibition of incest rather than just not knocking before going into the bathroom! So we don't know what happened in that tent except that telling his brothers seems to be the worst part. He brought shame on his father.

When Noah woke up, he cursed Ham... or his son Canaan anyway. He's saying that the promised son of Eve isn't Ham nor any of his descendants. A quick glance down to 10:6-20 shows Ham's family tree is a who's who of Old Testament baddies (Canaan, Egypt, Philistines, Sodom, Gomorrah, Amorites...) Sin creates God's enemies and untold trouble. It is never worth it!

What will God do about this new catastrophe? He won't flood the world again so what *will* He do?

### ***...but a gracious son***

In 9:23 Shem and Japheth do what Ham should have done; they graciously and discreetly cover over their father's nakedness. Noah blesses them both, but Shem especially since Japheth's blessing is to be where Shem is. 11:10 onwards will show how the promised son will come from Shem's line.

But Shem isn't just an ancestor of Jesus; he's a picture of Jesus too. He follows God's example from 3:21 of covering up with a garment the nakedness caused by sin. So too Jesus covers our shame, clothing us with His righteousness.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this whole Noah story. He's the one righteous man who will save humanity. He's the one safe place to be when God's wrath comes. He's the second Adam who will take to a *new* new creation without the old problem of sin, fixing our evil hearts. He's the bringer of a *new* new covenant without the lingering threat of judgment. He's the sacrifice God accepts and so vows not to punish. He's the promised gracious son who doesn't shame us but covers our sins. Praise God for Jesus!