

INTRODUCTION

People of God, the sad reality of our world that we live in is that it is full of sin and sinners. After our first parents sinned in the Garden, mankind's sin was left unchecked for over 1600 years without God's intervention. Our sin grew to such a hideous strength that Gen. 6 says: "*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually.*" Our was so bad, so hideous, so disgusting and foul and perverse, that it grieved God's heart that he even made man in the first place. So God determined to destroy all creation through a flood – man, animals, birds, because our sin and its corrupting influence in the world was so bad.

WALK WITH GOD

But even in the midst of such great sin, there is still great hope. For the word says, *Noah found favor, or grace, in the eyes of the Lord.* Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. And this was so because God was gracious to him. He was so righteous in fact, that the Bible says Noah *walked with God.* This is significant because Enoch also walked with God.

Enoch, it is believed, did not die, but he was translated directly from earth to heaven, and so was preserved from death, and from the corrupting influences of sin in the world. He did not die, but rather, he walked with God. Likewise, because Noah was so righteous and walked with God, we might expect a similar outcome in his life. And we see in fact there is a similarity. Because Noah walked with God, God chose not to destroy Noah in the flood.

This gives us an understanding of how it is that we all are to likewise escape the wrath of God due to sin, and to be protected from sins corrupting influence in the world: we must be like Enoch, and like Noah, and we must also walk with God... Micah 6:8 describes this as God's basic requirement for all persons...

*He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

CALLED OUT

Now, because of God's grace upon Noah, he was saved from the wrath of God in the flood, him and his household, 8 persons total, signifying a New Creation. Through Noah, the world was brought into a new era. The world before the flood was called by Peter, the world that then was. After Noah we all now live in the world that now is. But we also look forward to the world that is to come. And just as Noah was preserved from the old world and brought into the new world, so too do we see a number of times God calls his people out of an old world which is reserved for punishment, and brings them into a new world of peace and rest. At least until sin destroys it and the cycle has to start over.

After the flood waters receded, Noah is called out of the ark, and the first thing he does is offer sacrifices.

Abraham is called out of Ur of the Chaldees, and he too then offers sacrifices in the new land.

Israel is called out of Egypt to offer sacrifices to God.

The Church in the New Testament was called out of Old Covenant Judaism, into the New Covenant and to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving in Christ.

And today and through out all history the Church everywhere is called out of the whore Babylon to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God based upon the one sacrifice of Christ.

We are all, each and every day called out of a world that is destined to perish because of its sin, in order to walk with God and offer up worship

and obedience which brings a cursed dead world back to life. And in that world, of which the Noah story is a type, we will find our Rest.

REST

For that is what Noah's name means - "Rest." Noah's father Lamech prophesied upon Noah's birth saying this: *Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief (rest) from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.*"

It was because of Adam's sin that the ground was cursed, and thorns and thistles it produced. Man's task under the curse was to toil with his hands by the sweat of his brow battling with the creation forcing it to bring forth fruit,. Before sin entered the world, it did quite naturally and easily. But because of the curse of sin on man, and on the ground, the fruits of righteousness are hard to come by.

So even the curse of the ground itself is a picture of the curse on man. Man was taken from the ground, and so the types of thorns and thistles the ground produces indicates to us the type of men that would be produce in the world. Despite how much one labors, and strives to raise their children right, they still produce thorns and thistles. Some worse than others - but all in all, we are all sinners, fallen short of the glory of God.

But Noah is going to give us rest from sin and the curse. With Noah, there is going to be some righteousness in the new creation, such that, in Noah, we will find our rest from sin. This is what is promised.

And how does Noah give rest and relief to the world? As I intimated before, it was through the offering of a sacrifice. After God told Noah to go out from the ark, him and his wife and his sons and his sons' wives with him, and all living creatures,

*20*Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. *21*And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

22“While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”

Noah’s first act upon being called out of the ark was to build an altar and offer up animal sacrifices. The sacrifice was called a “pleasing” aroma. The word “pleasing” is the word Nico-ach, which is actually a pun on Noah’s name, which is Noach.

Lamek called his son “Noah” because he hoped that he would bring us rest from the labor of our hands (5:29): here God implies that it was Noah’s pleasing sacrifice is what in fact gives us rest.”

GOD’S COMPASSION

The sacrifice pleases God so much that God promises to never curse the ground again because of man. That is, he will not curse the ground worse than what it already is, he will not afflict man with any worse natural punishment because of sin. Neither will he strike down every living creature again in a flood. In fact, God was so pleased with Noah’s sacrifice that he also promised that the rhythms of nature upon which all life depends will continue all the days of the earth.

Now what is the reasoning for such kindness toward man? Well it is not that man is now less sinful. In Gen. 6:5 it is said that “every thought and

intention of man's heart is only evil continually. Then, in 8:21, the Lord declares he will not curse the ground further, because the intentions of man's heart is evil from the days of his youth.

Now this might sound like a strange reason to not destroy man again, because we are evil from our youth – some might think that even greater reason to destroy us. But God here shows compassion and mercy upon us that is almost unthinkable.

God knows our frame, and knows that we are nothing but dust. For Psalm 103 says:

*8The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
9He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
10He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
11For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
12as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
13As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
14For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.*

The Lord is choosing to now be even more patient with man and have even greater compassion us, despite our sin, so as to never destroy us with a flood of water ever again. And what is the reason why God's patience and longsuffering toward sinners is increased so much? The only hint the narrative gives us for God's change of heart toward sinful man is the sacrifice that Noah offered, which propitiated God's wrath.

This of course looks toward the greatest sacrifice ever made, when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross as a propitiation for sins of the whole world. I like what Cornelius Vanderwaal says:

“Behind the sacrifice made by Noah we catch a glimpse of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is for His sake and the sake of His kingship, which is dawning throughout the world, that the world still exists. Golgotha is tied up with the course of history, the rotation of the seasons, and the balance we find throughout the universe. It is Christ’s return that will finally put an end to the order of things that we call our world.”

Noah is a type of Christ who brings to rest God’s wrath against sin, and sin’s corrupting influences in society. It is because of Christ that world will never get so corrupt as it was before the flood. There is common grace that spills over into the world from the Cup Christ’s Blood. Even the preservation of the natural world world to its natural end, is made possible by pleasing aroma of the sacrifice of himself on top of the mountain called Calvary. All of creation is renewed and preserved through this one sacrifice of our great savior, and our calling to rule the world on God’s behalf as his image bearers is also renewed because of Him.

RAINBOW

Now all of this is promised to us by God. But God likes to confirm his promises and covenants with a sign. And this is what the rainbow is. The rainbow is the sign of God’s covenant that he would never destroy the earth or its inhabitants, man and animal, ever again, with a flood of water.

He says *“This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: [13](#)I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. [14](#)When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, [15](#)I*

will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16**When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” **17**God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Now notice that it is called a bow, and not a rain bow. It is the same bow as in bow and arrows. And this is significant. The rainbow is God’s warbow. And during the storms of the flood, God’s wrath was being shot at the earth in the arrows of lightning.

Psalm 7:12-13 says,

*“If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;
He has bent and readied his bow;
He has prepared for him his deadly weapons,
Making his arrows fiery shafts.”*

Psalm 18:14 –

*He sent out his arrows and scattered them;
He flashed forth lightnings and routed them.*

In the storms of the flood God’s wrath and judgment were shot at the earth in the arrows of lightning. And when God was done destroying the earth, and after Noah made propitiation for the sins of the world, God hung up his bow and promised to no longer destroy the earth with a flood ever again, and his wrath was brought to rest.

Now if you think of the shape of the bow in the sky, what direction is it pointing? The bow’s string would essentially be on the horizon, and the arrow would be shooting up toward God in Heaven. There is significance in this.

When covenants are made there are usually self-maledictory oaths which the covenant maker takes upon himself when making a covenant, and that malediction is signified in the sign. Basically saying, may God do so to me if I break my oath and covenant. Like in circumcision, if I break this Covenant may I be cut off from the covenant. Like in Baptism, may I be drowned in the waters of my baptism, like Pharaoh and his armies, if I ever break this covenant. Well here, in the Covenant with Noah, God is the one who is making the promise and he is giving the sign so that he would remember.

So, if you look at the bow, it is aimed up toward Heaven, toward God, so that, if God ever breaks His promise to never destroy the earth with a flood again, God will pour out his wrath against himself, God will shoot his arrows at himself.

People of God, remember that the story of Noah is the story of Christ. The Lord pointed his bow at his beloved Son and shot every last one of his arrows of judgment at him, against your sin so that his bow could be turned away from you. And because Christ has appeased the wrath of God and offered himself up as a well-pleasing sacrifice to God, God's wrath against you is now at rest.

God says that when he brings the clouds and when he sees the bow in the clouds He will remember. God's seeing of the rainbow contrasts with his seeing the corruption of the earth in 6:12. The rainbow reminds him of his covenant not to destroy all flesh again, whereas the corruption of man which he previously saw is what promoted the flood.

When God remembers His covenant he is reminded to show forth his justice against sin supremely in the covenant of grace, whereby he overlooks all our sins and preserves the earth for the sake of redeeming sinners in Christ.

God desires no one to die, but that all would come to repentance and live. God promising to withhold judgment is for that reason. The mercy of God is patient and longsuffering, so that more and more people may come to a knowledge of the truth.

But does God only remember when the rain bow comes out? Surely there is a time somewhere on the earth where there is not a rainbow shining. Even if for one second. But that wouldn't even matter, because the rainbow is always shining around God.

According to Ezek. 1 and Rev. 4, there is a rainbow of glory around the throne of God in Heaven, so that God always looks upon us through the lens of his rainbow colored glory and is therefore constantly reminded to be patient and merciful with us, because of His covenant with Noah, but chiefly through the covenant made with Christ.

When we see God's rainbow, and we are reminded of God's covenant, and it is like we are seeing the glory of God's throne which is built upon his mercy and grace break through from Heaven to Earth.

Because of the sacrifice made by Noah, and especially because of Christ's sacrifice, the farmer today can plow confidently and history can unfold. It's all because of the grace of God." And so that "The world would be the ground on which the Church could build"¹ and continue to call sinners to repentance so that they may flee from the wrath of God against sin, learn to worship the Lord, be preserved from the corrupting influences of sin in the world, and learn to walk with God like Noah, and find rest for their souls.

CONCLUSION

So people of God, as we see our world today corrupting themselves and giving greater approval towards ever increasing destructive sins, you can

¹ Vanderwaal, Search the Scriptures: Genesis-Exodus, pg. 66-67.

know that God see it too. And if God has been patient with them thus far, and has been patient with you, you can bear to give sinners more a bit more compassion and mercy, and even prayer.

When you see God's covenant sign waving from a flag which celebrates those same exact sins that brought God's judgment in the first place, you don't have to get upset. You don't have to get mad. They have not stolen anything from God. God remembers the true meaning of the rainbow, and he is still choosing to be merciful to them, and to you. Instead, what I would like for you to do the next time you see a rainbow, or a rainbow colored flag, I want you to think of God's amazing grace to forgive you of your many sins by accepting the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ for you, and signified in the rainbow, and then pray for someone who is still trapped in their sins that through the mercy and grace of God, they may find salvation in the ark of Christ.

And for all who are struggling with sin, just remember the words of the Lord Jesus who said, *Come, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

