

Our Covenant God – Part Eighteen

God's covenant with Noah

Last week we saw that the Abrahamic covenant was the very first covenant that God cut with Mankind but that He had indeed given and established a covenant with Noah beforehand. Before we can explore the covenant, we need to meet the man of the covenant, i.e. Noah. Who is he? What do we know about him?

We are introduced to Noah in Genesis 5:29 where his father makes a very strange statement about him:

Genesis 5:28-29 (NKJV) Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son. And he called his name Noah, saying, "This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."

Noah means Rest

Noah's name means rest. It means the same as 'Sabbath'. Rest is a common theme throughout the Bible. God wants to give His people rest. Rest from what? Rest from the excessively hard work that was the result of the ground being cursed by God. But when was the ground cursed by the Lord? We find the answer to this in Genesis 3.

In Genesis 1 and 2 we read about the Creation. In six days God created the entire universe. He left the creation of Man to the very last day, taking great care as He formed the Man out of the ground and tenderly placed him in a garden that God had planted specially for the Man. Then God caused the Man to fall into a deep sleep and He then formed the Woman from out of the body of the Man. His name was Adam, which means Man. Her name was Woman. She was his equal; the same as him and yet different to him. And once they, the pinnacle of God's Creation, were finished, all of God's handiwork was done and God said it was very good.

And then God rested. He didn't rest because He was tired. He rested because His work was done. It was all perfect. There was no more to be done.

But then calamity struck. The Man and the Woman disobeyed God's command and sin entered the world. Sin brought death and decay; sickness and disease. The perfect harmony of Creation was thrown out of balance and all that God had done was reversed because of one crime. It was God who gave them life but now death had entered and marred the perfection of Creation. What had taken six days to create would slowly unravel and disintegrate over a few thousand years. What a calamity!

In Genesis 3 we read about what is commonly called the "Adamic Curse". This is a misnomer because Adam was never cursed. Instead, it was the ground that was cursed. Because Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, the ground would no longer yield good fruit for him to eat. Grains would now be his food and he would have to work very hard to get that grain. Grain is very different to fruit. Fruit is tasty, refreshing and energizing. You eat it straight off the tree. Grain, on the other hand, needs to be ground up, combined with other ingredients, and then cooked to make bread to eat. There is so much more work involved in preparing bread as food as opposed to eating fruit. Thorns and thistles are no threat to fruit trees but they choke grain. Eventually, Adam would die. In death he would be part of the same soil that had originally given him life.

Remember that God created Man on day six and then rested on day seven. He could have made him on any other day of Creation but He chose to make him on day six. He left him to the very end. I believe that is because God made Man to enter into His rest. He did not make Man to work hard. He made him to enjoy everything that God had made. When Man sinned, they lost many things. One of those things was **rest**.

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This is what Lamech was referring to in Genesis 5:28. Noah's name means **rest**. Noah came to return Mankind back to that state of rest. Noah was the one who would bring an end to the ground being cursed. But how could that be? To answer that question, we need to examine Genesis 3:28-29 to see if there is any indication of a time limit to the curse.

Genesis 3:17-19 (NKJV) Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it **all the days of your life**. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread **till you return to the ground**, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and **to dust you shall return**."

The phrases that I highlighted in the verse indicate that there was indeed a time limit to this curse. It would not last forever; in fact the ground was only cursed for the duration of Adam's lifetime. When, then, did Adam die? When was the curse over?

Genesis 5 lists genealogies from Adam to Noah's three sons. Because it tells us how long each person lived we can calculate when each person's death occurred. Adam died in year 930. The first person in the genealogy born after year 930 was Noah. He was born 126 years later, in year 1056. (see attached chart)

Interestingly enough, Noah was 600 years old at the time of the Flood. Rest could only come after the Flood. This follows the same pattern of numbers that we see in the Creation: on day six God finished His Work and day seven He rested. In year 600 of Noah's life there was the Flood and so after the Flood there was rest.

The Flood was a death sentence on a world-wide scale. Surely it was the culmination of the curse on the Earth because of Adam's sin as well as the accumulated sin of all humanity for people had deteriorated morally to the point that God actually regretted having made Man! What a terrible state of affairs! The whole earth was polluted by sin. In fact, in Noah's day he was the only person who listened to the voice of God. No one else even seemed interested in the Lord. When the Flood waters arrived, they killed, cleansed, and purified. After the Flood it was a new beginning for all of Creation.

Once the floodwaters subsided and they were back on dry land, Noah offered up one of each of the clean animals that were on the Ark in sacrifice to God. As God smelled the aroma of the sacrifices, He said in His heart that He would never again curse the ground for man's sake. Then He made Himself a promise to never again destroy every living thing. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22 NKJV).

This is what I believe the prophet Jeremiah refers to as God's covenant with day and night. Jeremiah said that it can never be broken (Jeremiah 33:19-26).

Genesis 8:21-22 (NKJV) 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.]"

Do you see that in God's own words, He said that the ground would never again be cursed because of Man? The so-called Adamic curse was over. It was a time of rest. God had started all over again with one family, just as He had done before with Adam. He blessed Noah just as He had blessed Adam and the Woman, saying "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." (Genesis 9:1). It was a time of resurrection, restoration, and rejuvenation. The earth that was cursed before was blessed again.

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Genesis 8:22 (NKJV) “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”

After Noah, did Mankind mend their ways and follow God? Not a chance! Instead, they decided to dethrone God and built the Tower of Babel. But this time, when man sinned, God did not curse the earth. Instead, He confused them by changing their languages and people then scattered all over the world because they could not communicate with each other.

Later on we see God starting all over again with Abraham, bringing Mankind into covenant relationship with Himself. Abraham and his descendants were to possess the Promised Land. Just like with Adam and Noah, God wanted them to rule and reign and take dominion over the Land.

Time and time again, God has given Mankind a fresh start. Finally, God sent Jesus to this earth to become the last Adam, the last start-over for Mankind. What a gracious God we serve! He is so patient and faithful. His Plan is and always was to redeem (buy back) Mankind and His Creation.

After the Flood, just as God promised, He never again cursed the Earth for Mankind's sins. In fact, God has given the Earth the ability to defend herself. Sin always defiles. It defiles the person and it defiles the land.

On a number of occasions God warned the children of Israel that if they sinned the Promised Land would vomit them out.

Leviticus 18:26-28 (NKJV) You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that *were* before you.

Everything that Man does effects the ground that he lives on and was formed from. Even in death he returns to that same ground. It is impossible to separate the Man from the dust of the Earth except through death and resurrection. In Biblical days the land would even be called by the same name as that of the people who lived on it. We see this even with Israel. Israel is a person (Jacob); Israel is a nation (Jacob's descendants); and Israel is a land. The land is the origin of life for the person. The person is the origin of life for the nation. When the people die they return to the land. The three are indelibly linked together.

Sin always destroys the person who sins. It steals their land from them. When Adam sinned he lost the Garden in Eden. Cain sinned and lost his land, becoming a vagabond in the land of Nod. Nod means “restlessness”. In the days of the Tower of Babel, they sinned and were scattered over the earth, losing their land. In the days of Noah, whoever was outside the Ark lost their land and their lives. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah lost their land and lives because of sin. Canaan lost their land because of their sin. Israel lost her land because of sin. Your land is a place of rest. It was in the Garden in Eden that there was rest. When you lose your land, you lose your rest because you then have to work hard to get whatever your land was supposed to give you.

Right through the Word of God we see that God is always calling out to His people, pointing them to a place of rest. That is why He convicts us of sin. He doesn't want it to steal our rest and curse our land. That is how it has always been with God. He has always urged His people to find the rest that He has provided for them!

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2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

When we enter into a state of rest it is not that we quit working. It means that God has completed His work and we rejoice in the fruits of His labors. Before he sinned, Adam did work as a gardener, looking after the garden that God had planted. It was pleasurable work and it satisfied him. After the curse, however, that same work then included digging the soil and planting the seeds himself into the cursed ground. Because of the curse, work became an unpleasant chore, producing a lot of sweat and little fruit.

Deuteronomy describes the land that God had promised Abraham as an inheritance:

Deuteronomy 8:7-9 (NKJV) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

This is the land that God promised the descendants of Abraham. It was a land of more-than-enough. God is the God of more-than-enough. He provided His people with fruit and trees. All the Israelites needed to do was rest under their shade, care for them, and pluck their fruit.

This state of rest is what Lamech was referring to when he named his son, Rest. The arrival of Rest (Noah) announced to the world that it was a time of blessing and rejoicing for indeed the curse was over (for the land and people, not for the snake). God's plan for Mankind from the very beginning was that he would enter into the rest of God.

1 Kings 4:25 (NKJV) And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

That is how the land is meant to be! Each man in a state of rest, feeding off the fruit that their own land gives them! And this state of rest is available to people today. It is stolen from us the same way that it was stolen from others ever since, and including, Adam. When we sin we lose our land. That is why Noah's arrival was so important; that is why Noah's name was so important: because the so-called "Adamic Curse" was over and God wanted people to enter His rest... again.

Homework Question #1: Did God curse Adam when he sinned?

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Homework Question #2: Consider this statement: “Man was created to enter into the rest of God”. What does that mean to you?

Homework Question #3: Many preachers emphasize the importance of living a holy lifestyle. Considering this lesson, what would you say would be a balanced and good way for a preacher to present that subject?

Homework Question #4: When and how does the ‘Adamic curse’ end?

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Genesis 5 Genealogy

