**The God of Covenant, Part One**  March 6, 2016

Genesis 8:21b-22

**Coffee / Question**

When you hear the word covenant what do you think of; what is your understanding of a covenant?

**Feedback:**

A covenant is a legal, contractual agreement between two or more parties,

with agreed upon terms to do something or to refrain from doing something.

These terms can be either conditional or unconditional.

With a **conditional covenant**, if at any point the terms are not met or they are broken, then legal action can be initiated to enforce compliance or to invalidate the covenant. An **unconditional covenant** has no terms that would nullify it.

Land purchase; marriage

When it comes to the covenants that are spoken of in the Bible, all of them have a tangible sign attached to them that represented the promises being made.

The sign of the covenant made between God and Abraham was **circumcision**.

The sign of the covenant made between God and Moses and the people of Israel,

was the **Sabbath.**

The passage we are going to study today and next week, speaks of the first covenant God made with human beings after Adam and Eve’s choice to disobey God.

In numerous instances in the Bible, God has chosen to disclose the content of historical conversations which the Father, Son and Spirit had with one another.

These conversations are incredibly important for they reveal to us not only God’s thoughts, but how God thinks.

We’ve already read and studied several such conversations in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 1: 26: “*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule*

*over…all the earth.”*

Genesis 3:22: “*The man…must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”*

Genesis 6:7: “*I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth…*

*for I am grieved that I have made them.”*

In Genesis 8:21-22 God reveals to us another of these conversations.

This conversation God had with himself took place just before he made a covenant with Noah. As such it explains why God did what he did.

Particularly we are meant to take note of two phrases:

**“never again,”** and **“even though.”**

Let’s start with “never again.”

God resolved that there would “never again” be another global flood.

Why did the Father, Son and Spirit decide this?

Did they regret judging mankind and the earth?

**To answer that we need to ask why did God send the flood?**

In the days of Noah the practice of evil had crossed a line from which there was no return. Fallen angels had found a way to marry and impregnate human women, and in doing so had damaged the human DNA. God could not and would not allow that practice to continue. Genesis 6:1-4; Jude 6.

The judgment of the flood dealt with the perpetrators (angelic and human) and the damage that had been done by their sin.

Additionally, humanity’s moral corruption had become so bad that in God’s own words, recorded in Genesis 6:5, *“every inclination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil all the time.”*

God through the prophet Enoch had sent warning. Jude 14-15: *See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

Enoch had a son, and the name of that son, Methuselah, was to be a constant reminder to the people of that day of that particular prophecy, for Methuselah’s name meant: ***his death shall bring it.***

Methuselah lived 969 years.

God gave 969 years for the people of that day to repent.

And after all that time, only eight did.

These details confirm that when God stated “never again” he did not state this because he regretted judging the sin of that generation.

Did God decide “never again” because the judgment of the flood had changed the human heart from its default of sin?

Genesis 6:9 describes Noah as being a righteous man who was blameless in all his ways. Did that mean Noah’s descendants, (which includes us) were born righteous like Noah was righteous? Could this be why God said, “never again?”

Just read a few pages forward in the book of Genesis and this question is answered.

So why then did God decide never again?

His resolve has everything to do with who God is and God’s great love for mankind and the plan of rescue which his love initiated.

Let’s read verse 21 again.

Those two phrases, “never again” and “enough though” are inseparably linked.

What does this tell us?

The fact of the flood confirms that God is the Judge of the earth and that he is just.

But at the same time God reveals to us that he is the God of grace.

This is why he determined “never again.”

In stating “never again,” God purposed that he would do something unanticipated by all creation that would allow him to be both just and full of grace.

Because we have the completed story of the Bible we know what that something is. It wasn’t that God reluctantly agreed to lower his moral bar.

God has and he will continue to deal justly with sin.

Through the apostle Peter God assures us that another great day of judgment will come. Listen to what God says in 2 Peter 3:1-10.

This conversation in Genesis 8 simply speaks to the plan agreed upon by the Father, Son and Spirit before the creation of the world; before humanity’s fall into sin.

Instead of God’s wrath falling on humanity for sin committed, God purposed in love that the sin of the world would be placed on the Messiah, who we know to be God the Son and that the Father’s just wrath would fall on him.

If that wasn’t the case there would have been many additional global floods.

It was the plan of God that Jesus the Sinless One would become sin for us all.

Because he did, when a person trusts in him, God cancels their sin because of Jesus’ sacrifice and then credit’s that person with Jesus’ goodness.

God never forces a person to come to Jesus, his Savior, just as no one was forced to go into the ark. A person is free to reject God’s means of salvation. But if they do, then they must face God’s wrath for the sin they’ve committed.

But there is a way of escape for any and all who would avail themselves of it.

In the words of 1 Thessalonians 1:10, God’s way of escape is *“Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.”*

The desire of God is that all humanity, would choose, not wrath, but *“to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:9

Because of God’s amazing, astounding grace, that was expressed so long ago in the time of Noah, when this covenant was initiated, the history of humanity continues to unfold, and with it the opportunity for every person to avail themselves of God’s amnesty; an amnesty which will remain in affect until the moment Jesus visibly returns to earth.

This is the greater context which explains God’s resolve as recorded in verse 22.

Even though, the heart of humanity is evil from childhood, as long as the earth endures, God assures us that seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.

This is the first thing that this passage reminds us of: God’s grace.

There is a second thing we want to take note of.

Everyone today is talking about climate change.

And typically the message communicated is that humans are responsible for what is happening to the earth.

I believe verse 22 tells us that there is more to this story.

The Creator says that he built into the earth the following factors:

\* the capacity to grow food - *seedtime and harvest*

\* variables in temperature - *cold and heat*

\* differing seasons - *summer and winter*

\* a daily rhythm - *day and night*

The Creator who formed the earth, said: *“As long as the earth endures, the following will never cease.”* So let me ask two questions. Who determines how long the earth endures? Who influences and controls the specific factors mentioned?

What we do as humans matter.

Without question, we have contributed to the conditions currently happening around the globe.

We are to care for the earth and its creatures because we were made by God and given responsibility by him to be stewards; his care-takers.

But if we lay the blame for climate change completely on human beings, we disregard one of the major means used by God throughout history to get the attention of humans.

Look at Amos 4:7-9.

In the past God has used climate change as a means to wake people up spiritually.

The days of Amos were not the only time God used drought and plague.

Remember Elijah? A three and a half year drought.

Remember the famine that resulted in Jacob moving to Egypt?

Remember the plagues? Storms. Water changed to blood. Locusts.

We need to recognize that in this present time, God is trying to get humanity’s attention. The sheer scale, scope and speed of what is happening is meant to shake us out of our spiritual lethargy.

We are being reminded that how the earth functions is beyond our ability to control.

We do not determine when it rains and how much rain falls.

We can’t direct the path of a storm.

We can’t end an el nino.

We can’t stop a drought.

We can’t dial down the velocity of the wind.

We don’t control how hot or cold it gets.

But God reveals to us that he does.

Look at Job 38.

The sheer vastness and complexity of how the earth functions, is meant to remind us that the LORD is God and we are not.

When God permits weather patterns to go wonky, he does so in order to get humanity’s attention so that we might begin to seek after him; to inquire of him, asking, “What is it that you are saying to us?”

And ultimately, God takes such action, in order that we might respond and return to him.

In this short conversation, God reveals that he, the Creator, is in charge.

The Creator is the Judge.

And the Creator is the God of grace.

He is the God who said “never again,” “even though.”

He is the God who has proven he is greater than evil and is able to contain and place those who practice evil in a place where they can no longer cause chaos and ruin.

He is the God who planned to save humanity before he created all that is.

And he is the God who in history has accomplished his great salvation.

He is the God who since the days of Noah until this present time, has invited anyone who will come to him, to come, and in coming to receive from him, salvation.

Next week we will dig into the details of the covenant God made with Noah.

And as we do, we will learn more of who the LORD is.

But the scripture we’ve studies this morning, assures us that he is the One who is more than capable of governing the world and our lives.