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GENESIS: COVENANT

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²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²²While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

Genesis 8:20–22 (ESV)

¹And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Genesis 9:1–4 (ESV)

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Genesis 1:28–30 (ESV)

Just as God’s pronouncement in chapter 3 made it clear that despite the Fall the blessing was still intact, here the text makes clear that despite the Flood, the blessing is still largely intact. After the Fall the ground would not be cooperative, so that food was not as easily obtainable. Likewise here we find that animals will not be cooperative, with the result that obtaining food will continue to be a challenge.¹

⁵And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. ⁷And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”

[Genesis 9:5-7 \(ESV\)](#)

Human life, because of the image of God, remains under the protection of God. Accountability to God for preserving human life is put into humanity's hands, thus instituting blood vengeance in the ancient world and capital punishment in modern societies.²

¹⁰“If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people.

[Leviticus 17:10 \(ESV\)](#)

¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

[Acts 15:19–20 \(ESV\)](#)

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²And God said, “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: ¹³I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I 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. ¹⁶When 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.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

[Genesis 9:8-17 \(ESV\)](#)

If we were to follow the tracking of Genesis 1–3, the covenant here should be parallel to the Garden of Eden narrative of Genesis 2, and indeed that idea can find easy support³ In the same manner, the Flood had, in a real way, undone the blessing (the result of being fruitful and multiplying was undone when the population was wiped out and food was destroyed). The covenant in 9:8–17 reestablishes the functionality of the blessing in the same way that the functionality of the cosmos has been reestablished in chapter 8.⁴

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JESUS

¹⁰“If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people.

¹¹For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

[Leviticus 17:10–11 \(ESV\)](#)

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

[Matthew 28:18–20 \(ESV\)](#)

¹ Walton, J. H. (2001). [Genesis](#) (p. 341). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² Walton, J. H. (2001). [Genesis](#) (p. 343). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ Walton, J. H. (2001). [Genesis](#) (p. 344). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ Walton, J. H. (2001). [Genesis](#) (p. 344). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.