North Summit Church
Genesis 9:1–29
November 8, 2026
The Noahic Covenant

INTRODUCTION

We're continuing our journey through In the Beginning: the "Prologue" of the Bible that gives us the deep grammar of who God is, who we are, why we exist, and what went wrong. Genesis 1–11.

- Last week we went through the flood with Noah. The same water that ended the world carried the ark. Then Noah stepped onto dry ground, built an altar, and God made a promise in his heart: never again.

- We ended with a problem. The flood removed the people, but it did not remove what was wrong with them. God said the human heart is "evil from his youth" (8:21). So what did Noah's family carry out of the ark? Today we find out.

- Today God gives us his promise, and the Bible uses a word that will follow us all the way to Revelation: **covenant**.

- We saw it once before, in 6:18. In Genesis 9 it shows up seven times in ten verses. If we understand this word, we will understand how God relates to his people for the rest of the Bible.

- **Here is the big idea for today: God has bound himself to the whole world by his promise, and he holds us responsible for one another.**

READ: Genesis 9:1–7.
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1. Life Belongs to God (9:1–7)

Genesis 9:1–7
"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The 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. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And 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. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.'"

The Same Blessing in a Renewed World

- Verse 1 should sound familiar. "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" is what God said

to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. He says it at the beginning of this paragraph and again at the end. The flood did not cancel the mission. God starts over with the same plan.

- But the world is different now. Verse 2 says the animals will live in "fear" and "dread" of people. Humans still rule, but there is fear in it now. And for the first time, God gives animals as food: "As I gave you the green plants, I give you everything."

One Limit

- God gives one limit: "You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." Even when a person takes an animal's life, that life still belongs to God. We receive life. We do not own it.

- If that is true of animals, it is even more true of people. In verse 5 God says, "I will require a reckoning," and he says it three times in one verse. God will ask for an account of every human life.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

- The ESV says, "From his fellow man I will require a reckoning." The Hebrew is more personal. It says, "from the hand of each man's brother" (*ish achiv*).

- That word "brother" should take us back to Cain. After he killed Abel, God asked him where his brother was.

Genesis 4:9
"Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'"

- Cain asked that question to get out of responsibility. In Genesis 9, God answers it. Yes. You are your brother's keeper. God will ask each one of us about the lives around us.

Justice Built on the Image of God

- Then verse 6 gives the reason: "for God made man in his own image." This is the first time the Bible gives a reason for human justice, and the reason is the image of God. Murder is not only a crime against a person. It is an attack on the God whose image that person bears.

- Notice the words "by man." God puts the work of justice into human hands. That is where courts, laws, and governments get their job (Paul picks this up in Romans 13:4). Justice matters because people matter, and people matter because they bear God's image.

Application: You Are Your Brother's Keeper

- Our culture's answer to Cain's question is "Not my business." If it isn't my family, it isn't my problem. Genesis 9 doesn't let us talk that way.

- God will ask about the people next to us: the neighbor, the classmate everyone ignores, the coworker who is falling apart. We didn't sign up for that responsibility. It comes with being human.

- **Life belongs to God. Treat every life around you as one God will ask you about.**

- There is one more thing that I want to speak to that I believe is pertinent to our understanding here. Our culture has told us that our personal sin doesn't affect anyone else. "Who cares what I do in private, as long as it isn't hurting anyone else." The problem with that mentality is that it isn't reality. Even our private sins that no one else knows about have grave consequences on us, those around us, and our world at large. Sin breaks relationship (with God, with others, with ourselves) whether we see the effects immediately or not.

2. God's Everlasting Promise (9:8–17)

Genesis 9:8–11
"Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and 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. I 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.'"

What Is a Covenant?

- This word matters, so here is a definition for us to hold on to:

A covenant is a relationship God establishes by his own sworn word, binding himself to those he names, and binding them to one another.

- It helps to compare a covenant with a contract. A contract trades things: I give you money, you give me, a house, a job, a phone.

- A covenant binds people together. When someone breaks a contract, the deal is off. When people break covenant, they come under its judgment, but God stays bound by his word.

- Notice who does the talking. God says, "I establish my covenant." Noah doesn't negotiate, and nobody signs anything. God speaks, and God holds it in place.

Wider and Wider

- Listen to who is included. "You and your offspring after you" (v. 9). "Every living creature" (v. 10). "All future generations" (v. 12). "The earth" (v. 13). Each time, the circle gets wider.

- The animals didn't agree to this. The generations not yet born didn't agree to it. You didn't agree to it. You were included in this promise thousands of years before you were born.

Every person in this room lives inside the covenant God declared to Noah.

"Never Again"

- Twice God says "never again." No "if" is attached. God doesn't say, "If people behave, I won't flood the earth." He already knows they won't behave; he said so in 8:21. He promises anyway.

- Genesis calls it "the everlasting covenant" (v. 16). Centuries later, God himself calls it an oath.

Isaiah 54:9
"This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you."

- But be careful here. An everlasting promise does not mean people have no obligations. Verses 1–7 gave real commands. Isaiah says the people of the earth have "broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5). Later, Israel will break the covenant God made with them at Sinai (Jeremiah 31:32).

- **We can break covenant. God never does.** Psalm 89 speaks to this concerning the covenant God made with King David.

Psalm 89:30–34
"If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips."

- God asks faithfulness from his people in every covenant, and unfaithfulness has real consequences: "the rod." But God's promise does not fall apart when we fail. That is what makes a covenant with God different from any deal we make with each other.

A Sign for God's Covenant

Genesis 9:13, 16
"I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth... 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."

- Most of us were taught that the rainbow is a reminder for us. Read verse 16 again: "I will see it and remember." The sign is for God. He is not in danger of forgetting. He wants us to know he never will. And remember last week: when God remembers, he acts.

- The word "bow" is *qeshet*, the ordinary Hebrew word for a warrior's bow. After the flood, God hangs up his bow in the clouds.

Application: Use the Time God Gives

- Every morning the sun comes up on a world that is full of sinful people. Why? Because God keeps his promise. Jesus said our Father "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45).

- Some people look at that patience and decide God doesn't care. Peter says the opposite.

2 Peter 3:9
"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

- God's patience has a purpose. The world is still here so that people can still come to him. In the next chapter, Genesis lists the nations that came from Noah's sons. Those are the people God is patient with, and they are the people he sends us to.

- **God keeps his promise. The time he gives the world – is God's grace to the world – is more time for us to tell the world about him.**

3. Covering a Brother's Shame (9:18–29)

Genesis 9:20–23
"Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness."

A Familiar Story

- Noah walked with God. He built the ark and then an altar. Then the first thing we see him do in his new life is plant a vineyard, get drunk, and lie uncovered in his tent.

- This should sound like Adam: a garden, fruit, nakedness, shame. What God said in 8:21 shows up right away in the best man on earth. The flood did not fix the human heart, not even Noah's.

Saw and Told

- Ham "saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside." He didn't help his father. He saw his shame and passed it on.

- The words Genesis uses here, "uncovered" and "nakedness," are the same words Leviticus uses for sexual sin, and Leviticus says those were the sins of Canaan (Leviticus 18:3). Moses wants Israel to hear that. Some scholars think Ham did something worse than look. Genesis doesn't say, so we should be slow to go further than the text.

- What it does tell us is enough: he saw his father's shame, and he told it.

Took and Covered

- Now look at Shem and Japheth. They "took a garment," put it on their shoulders, walked in backward, and covered their father. "They did not see their father's nakedness." They did what God did for Adam and Eve: he covered their shame (3:21).

- In the Bible, nakedness is what ought to be covered. To expose it is to shame a person. Ham took his father's dignity. His brothers gave it back.

- And notice this. Noah's shame was his own fault. In Hebrew, verse 21 says he uncovered *himself*. But he was still their father, and he still bore God's image. We heard that in verse 6. Shem and Japheth honored him at his worst.

- They weren't guilty of anything. They took responsibility for his dignity anyway. Guilt asks, "What did I do wrong?" Responsibility asks, "What do I owe the people God has put around me?"

Genesis 9:24–27
"When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.' He also said, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.'"

Canaan, Not Ham

- Notice who is cursed: Canaan, Ham's son, not Ham himself. And Noah speaks these words, not God. Read with the rest of the Old Testament, this is a prophecy about the Canaanites and the very sins Leviticus describes.

- **I want to point this out for a reason.** For centuries, people used this verse to defend the enslavement of Africans, calling it "the curse of Ham." That reading is wrong. The text curses Canaan, not Ham, and it says nothing about anyone's skin. Using the Bible to defend slavery was sin.

- Then notice who Noah blesses: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem." He blesses God. God's promise will keep moving through Shem's family, and in two weeks we will follow that line toward Abraham.

- The chapter ends, "All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died" (v. 29). Noah dies. God's covenant goes on.

Application: Truth and Grace

- We live in a world of screenshots. When someone falls, the easiest thing to do is see it and tell: post it, send it to the group chat, pass it on. That's what Ham did. Proverbs says,

"Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

- It isn't only how we treat a brother. It's how we treat a whole world that is caught in sin. There are two ways to get this wrong.

- One is Ham's way. We expose, mock, and point. We treat people who are trapped by "the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13) as the enemy, and we almost enjoy how broken they are. But they bear the image of God (v. 6). They live under the same covenant we do. Jesus told us to love our enemies "so that you may be sons of your Father," who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:44–45).

- The other way is to pretend sin isn't sin. Shem and Japheth didn't do that. They walked in backward *because* their father's shame was real. They didn't excuse it or pretend that it wasn't there. They covered it.

- God calls us to be a people of truth and grace, like Jesus.

John 1:14
"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

- We don't compromise the truth. We speak it boldly and clearly, and we fight for what is right. But we also carry the only cure for what is broken: the grace of God. Our lives have to show the grace our words announce.

1 Peter 4:8
"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

- That is what it means for love to cover. Love doesn't pretend. Love "does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Love tells the truth about sin without stripping a sinner of his dignity.

- And because love tells the truth, it never hides harm. If someone is being hurt, love protects them and tells the people who need to know. **Covering someone's shame is never covering up someone's harm.**

- **Don't compromise the truth, and don't treat people as the enemy. Speak the truth boldly, and cover people with the grace you've been given.**

CONCLUSION: The Noahic Covenant

- Let's walk back through it. Life belongs to God, and he will ask us about the people around us. So be your brother's keeper.

- God promised "never again," and he has never broken his word, even when we have broken ours. So use the time he gives to tell the world about him.

- And when someone falls, don't see and tell. Speak the truth, and cover them with grace as people who bear God's image, without ever covering up harm.

- One last thing. Shem and Japheth covered their father's shame. Thousands of years later, soldiers stood at the foot of a cross.

Mark 15:24
"And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take."

- They took his clothes. Jesus hung on the cross exposed, carrying shame that was not his. Hebrews says he "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). He was uncovered so that we could be covered.

Galatians 3:27
"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

- That is the big idea we started with. God has bound himself to the whole world by his promise, and he holds us responsible for one another. In Jesus, God keeps every promise he has made and covers our shame. So go and do the same for one another.

Benediction

Numbers 6:24–26
"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

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Small Group Discussion Questions

1. My Brother's Keeper

> In Genesis 9:5, God says he will require a reckoning for human life "from the hand of each man's brother." That is God's answer to Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Who has God placed around you that you have treated as "not my business"? What would it look like this week to take responsibility for them?

2. "Never Again"

> God's promise to Noah has no "if" attached. People can break covenant, but God never does (Psalm 89:30–34). And God's patience gives the world time to turn to him (2 Peter 3:9).

How does a promise that doesn't depend on your performance change the way you live? Who is God being patient with that you could tell about him?

3. Covering a Brother's Shame

> Ham saw his father's shame and told it. Shem and Japheth took a garment and covered it, even though the shame wasn't their fault. Covering shame is not the same as covering up harm.

Where are you tempted to treat people caught in sin as the enemy? What would it look like to speak the truth without stripping them of their dignity?

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