

# Creation - Old and New

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'll do please turn back with me to Genesis, and we'll pick up reading from chapter 9 together.

So that's on page 10 of the Church Bibles. So Genesis chapter 9, and reading to verse 17.

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.

The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground and on all the fish in the sea. They are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.

[ 1 : 00 ] And for your lifeblood, I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. For in the image of God has God made mankind. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number and multiply on the earth and increase upon it.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with ye and with your descendants after ye and with every living creature that was with you, the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you, every living creature on earth.

I establish my covenant with ye. Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.

And God said, This is the sign of the covenant I'm making between me and ye and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come. I've set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

[ 2 : 16 ] Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and ye and all living creatures of every kind.

Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.

So God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant I've established between me and all life on earth. Amen.

This is God's word. Please keep it open, and we'll pray briefly for his help as we do that. Dear Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the Lord Jesus, who said on earth, Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

And so we pray, Father, that you would give us ears to hear and eyes to see what is in your word, what you would have us take from this place, and that you would change our hearts by it.

[ 3 : 25 ] For these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's often said, isn't it, the darkest hour comes just before the dawn.

And where we left off in Genesis last week was very dark. Indeed, God had poured out his anger against sin in the world in the flood and brought an end to life on earth.

Only Noah and his family and the animals with him in the ark were kept alive. It was devastating for us to see. But as Susie and I drove home, perhaps you saw as we saw, a glorious and dazzling double rainbow.

Very appropriate. One solid beam of light and color and a fainter arc above it. And while I'm not too softy, I hope, it did make me smile.

We don't go around, do we, looking for signs from God in the world? That's not normally how God communicates with us. But in this case, we can say, can't we, God gave us a sign.

[ 4 : 36 ] Because we know what God was saying through that rainbow to us, to our world, to himself, never again. Never again.

How do we know that? Because as we just read, well, this whole section from chapter 6 to chapter 9 of Genesis ends with a rainbow. And we just read this promise from God, didn't we?

Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you, all living creatures of every kind.

Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. And so, what did we see in the sky that evening? Well, we saw a sign of God's permanent, unchanging, unwavering faithfulness to his creation and this world, not only to preserve it, as we'll see, even to renew it.

And that rainbow was a trailer for that which we'll see this evening. God is faithful through and through to save us from the curse of sin. Out of the watery grave of a world that had been ruined by sin comes a new world, still stained by sin, but with a fresh start, an old creation, but made new.

[ 6 : 00 ] And that gives us two things, okay, to trust in and to thank God for this evening. And the first is this, a new creation secured by God's grace.

At the start of chapter eight, where we read, is where the tide turns in this story quite literally. And it starts with three all-important words.

But God remembered. He remembered. He remembered. Begins headlines, doesn't it? God's faithfulness in not forgetting his promise.

Think about where we are at this point in the story. After 10 generations of humanity, God had seen every inclination. The thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

But we saw one righteous, blameless man who walked faithfully with God. God rescued him and his family in the ark. And then the flood came.

[ 7 : 01 ] And we read, only Noah was left and those with him in the ark. And so those three words, but God remembered, they are like a beam of sunlight shining through the clouds on a stormy day.

Because they tell us that in the storm of his wrath, God has not forgotten his gracious promise to save, to bring them through through the flood of his wrath. He is faithful.

God had told Noah, I will uphold my covenant with you. And here is him following through. God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the ark.

And he sent a wind over the earth and the waters receded. Now, okay, to see the size and the scale of God's faithfulness here, we need to see the story that Genesis is telling at this point.

And the clue, okay, is that word wind. An unlikely word, maybe. But in Hebrew, the word is ruach, which is hard to say for an English man.

[ 8 : 08 ] Ruach. But it also means, in Hebrew, spirit. So, with that little Hebrew lesson, okay, in mind, where have we heard before in this book that God's ruach was over the waters?

Well, in the second verse of the book, the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And then what? Well, God spoke and he formed the world and he filled it. Now, I pointed out last time part of the logic of the flood was that God was effectively undoing his work of creation, unforming it and unfilling it.

So, now he's done that, we're kind of back to this original primitive watery chaos. It's like God has kind of thrown a pot of white paint over an old canvas.

So, it's a blank canvas, but it's not a new canvas. And so, now God's ruach or his wind spirit is blowing over the waters once again.

[ 9 : 18 ] What are we thinking might happen now? Well, surely, surely, a recreation, a reforming and refilling of the world by God.

Well, let's see that, okay, in the text, in real time. Verse 2 tells us, the springs of the deep and the floodgates of heaven had been closed.

So, the water kind of gushing up from the sea and the water falling down from the sky stopped. So, whereas before you couldn't tell where one stopped and the next started in the flood, well, now there is effectively a gap.

There's clear sky between them. And so, the clouds and the sea are separated once again as God did in the beginning. He made a vault separating the water under it from the water above it and He called it sky.

And then, as the waters we saw last time rose and rose and rose, now they three times recede, verse 1, and receded steadily, verse 3, and continued to recede, verse 5, until, what happens? [10:28] The tops of the mountains become visible. So, now the water is being gathered back together so that land pops up as God did in the beginning.

Let water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear, said God. Can you see what Genesis is telling us, the story it is telling?

God is not simply draining water away. He could have told us that in three seconds. No, it is telling us that He is recreating His world, resurrecting it from its watery grave by reforming it as He did the first time, separating, gathering the waters by His word and spirit.

And it's clear that that is exactly what Noah was waiting for God to do. You know, that's what this little drama, I think, with the raven and the dove is here to tell us, to remind us that someone on earth is still trusting in God to do what He said He would do.

When the raven doesn't come back, He sends a dove. Familiar, aren't we, with the comings and goings of the dove? Notice all of that takes months. 40 days pass, Noah cracks open the window, sends out the raven, then the dove, seven more days, then seven more days.

[11:53] And in those weeks of waiting, you imagine Noah's heart. Imagine he could have said with the psalmist those words from Psalm 130, I wait for the Lord.

My whole being waits in His word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning.

So Noah has real faith in God's faithfulness to him and his world. And in the end, his faith is proved right. God is proved trustworthy.

God sees that work through until every trace of the flood is cleared away and the land is completely dry. None of this grand designs. You, the poor couple, wading out of their caravan onto a flooded foundation in their wellies after the wettest winter for 20 years, lamenting that everything ran over schedule.

No, God has reformed His world and it is very good. And then, of course, He refills it. Verse 15, God said to Noah, come out of the ark.

[13:02] You, your wife, your sons, their wives, bring out every living creature with you. And here's the important bit. So they can multiply on the earth. Be fruitful and increase in number on it.

And of course, God has said that before, hasn't He? Be fruitful and multiply and fill the world in the beginning. So, can we see this is God recreating His world, resurrecting the cosmos, going back to the beginning again.

And the fact that we find this, only eight chapters into the Bible and nine pages shows us that this has been God's purpose from the start.

not something He made up at the end. His purpose from the start was not to leave His world, His very good creation in the grip of sin and death, but to redeem it.

Bible, from first to last, promises us the hope of a new creation. Peter writes this to the churches in his second letter in chapter three.

[14:12] He says, in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. That has been the hope of God's people from the days of Noah.

God promises in His word, perhaps this might surprise some of us here tonight, He promises not only to redeem our souls, but also our bodies, not only us, but our world and His cosmos.

God's people will be to belong to that new creation. Well, Genesis has shown us new world, new creatures.

Surely next, we see a new humanity, but wait, it says, one minute, because something is needed before a new humanity can step out into a redeemed world.

What is needed for us to live in God's new creation? Well, just have a look at verse 20 in chapter 8. You read, then God and Noah built an altar to the Lord and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

[15:25] Now, don't worry, this is not a scene of mass extinction. Remember that Noah had taken not one, but seven pairs of all the clean animals and just one pair of the rest, so he has plenty to spare and this is what it is for, bringing a burnt offering to God, which is a sacrifice for sin.

The Israelites reading this first would have known that. This is Leviticus chapter 1, lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, the same kind, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make

atonement for ye.

That's what Noah's doing. The sacrifice dies instead of him in his place to atone for the sins of him and his family. Atonement's a long word, but it literally spells out what the sacrifice does at-one-ment.

It is a sacrifice that makes us at-one again with God, brings us peace with God, reconciles us to God. That is what Noah is doing.

For the new humanity, for him and his family, a sacrifice for sin to die in their place. And that sacrifice secures their place in the new creation.

[ 16 : 46 ] God smells the sacrifice, Luke, and says in his heart, verse 21, never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though, even though, every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done. So notice what has changed and what hasn't changed. Okay, we have not changed.

God doesn't say, I won't curse the ground again because human beings are not sinful anymore. He doesn't even say, I won't curse the ground again because their sin is basically moderate and I don't mind too much.

No, he says he won't curse the ground even though we are still deeply ruined by sin. It's more or less word for word what he had said before the flood, isn't it?

that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart is only evil all the time. So we have not changed. What has changed then? Or what has changed is that now God vows never to destroy all life as he did in the flood.

[ 18 : 01 ] It is not that we are less deserving of his wrath but rather that his wrath has been satisfied. His wrath has been satisfied so he can promise the safety and security of the new humanity in his new created world.

And brothers and sisters we hold on tonight don't we to that very same promise on the very same basis. John describes the new earth in the very last book of the Bible Revelation as a physical place where God will dwell with us we will be his people God himself will be with us as our God he will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death will be no more no more mourning crying pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

And the reassurance that the very first book of the Bible Genesis gives us is that he will do it he is faithful he will not fail he will not forget he is faithful to his promise and he is powerful powerful to recreate a terribly sin torn and sin corrupted cosmos he has done it again before and so we know he will do it again now today the creation groans doesn't it under the curse for sin we groan under our sin but we do not have to worry that the day will not come when the whole creation is set free and the children of God are raised bodily from the dead in it because he has given us his word that that day is coming so what do we need to hope for that day here and now well firstly we know that we will only be part of God's new world by God's grace and not our goodness okay we've seen for us to be a new humanity to have a place in the new creation we need the sacrifice of the one righteous man so as Noah offered a sacrifice to atone for his family's sin so we need the sacrifice of the Lord

Jesus to atone for our sins we need him to have taken our place died our death for our sin before God we have not changed have we our sin is still in here and so we still need him and so we do not get into this new world friends by not sinning anymore by being good enough for God not even righteous Noah stepped out into the new creation without needing a sacrifice for his sin we will only get there by God's grace to us through the death of his son and so we need to trust in the cross of Jesus to bring us safely into that new creation and secondly if we trust in him we wait for him in faith perhaps you're thinking new creation sounds great but it's a long old time since God said that it's a long old time since Jesus rose from the dead where is it when is it coming why isn't it here well how do you think Noah felt 150 days at sea and then 40 more days and then another week and then another week he did it and never crossed his mind that

God was not going to do it and recreate his world that's what all his senses told him wasn't it but I don't think Noah ever doubted because nearly a year into the flood and he's still sending doves out the window to check and one day his senses did confirm what he had been told to hope for and he stepped out onto the dry land of a new world and he worshipped God for it and the point is brothers and sisters that one day that will be us one day that will be us stepping out into a new world made by God if we know the God that we are dealing with how incredibly faithful he is to his every word let

us not doubt it that we will walk with God in a new heavens and a new earth that he has perfectly recreated where righteousness dwells it might be years away it might be centuries away it might be tomorrow however long it is his proven promises his trustworthy word gives us an anchor for our hope today but life now isn't purely waiting is it for a new heavens and a new earth because we still live don't we in this earth says

[ 23 : 25 ] Genesis so secondly we trust in and worship God for the old creation that is preserved by God's promise yes at this point God has recreated the world but see how many pages are left in the Bible and it's pretty obvious that this is not the end of the story yet God has pressed reset on the world but he knows and we know that everything is still not as it should be we have the hope and the promise of a new creation but we still live in the old and it is still complicated we are still sinful the world is still cursed there is still death you notice even in a world washed clean God says to Noah in chapter 9 verse 2 the fear and dread of you will fall on all the various animals that's not how it was was it Adam lined up the creatures and he named them and ruled over them why are they now going to run away because Noah is going to eat them they will be food for you which is no doubt a great blessing

I was once a vegetarian I have no intention of returning to those days but it does show doesn't it what has changed in our relationship to the created order these creatures that we share the planet with generally run away when we get near and often for good reason there's still also death in the world look verse 5 I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being whoever sheds human blood by human shall their blood be shed for in the image of God has God made mankind and again this is a great blessing in a sense because God is taking the protection that he gave to Cain and extending it to all human life now no human life will be taken without it being avenged see not in spite of but because of the sanctity of human life the dignity that we have as

God's image bearers and so in God's word killing comes at a high price you cannot take a human life without forfeiting your own that is a God given deterrent isn't it from ending life yet what does it say that we need such a deterrent not to kill one another life in this world is complicated brothers and sisters no less than it was before the flood and only with that in view can we really appreciate how faithful God is how firm his commitment to this world and all life that is in it God promised Noah he would uphold his covenant and now he does in verse 11 and onwards I establish my covenant with you never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood God knows the flood hasn't fixed everything it wasn't designed to it was primarily wasn't it to punish not to restore but even with the sin problem not yet dealt with even with the curse still in place

God does not simply scrunch up the world and throw it in the shredder in fact he does the opposite from that how incredible he makes a promise to every living thing never again to do that but instead to sustain it and keep it going as long as the earth endures seed time and harvest cold and heat summer and winter day and night will never cease God promises to keep the world turning to keep the sun shining to keep the seasons coming and going we live in a world that is personally sustained by the creator no such thing as a God who created a beautiful cosmos and then left it to tick away in a corner he himself turns the second hand of history himself but think what a world he is promising to uphold a world that resists him that rebels against him this is what makes his faithfulness extraordinary you think how patient how long suffering how faithful

God would have to be to keep this promise to this world and yet we woke up did we not this morning and the sun has shined and the rain has fallen things have grown we have had delicious food to eat we will go to bed tonight because God has been true to his word and preserved this world no wonder how often do we recognize and thank God for that faithfulness for his common grace to all people to all life on earth that none of us deserve if you're here tonight and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian the Bible says that God himself has given you every day that you've been alive every good thing that you've enjoyed all your family and friends have you ever stopped to thank him for that you sometimes we feel don't we so overwhelmed by the beauty or the goodness or the enjoyment of a thing in the world and we feel grateful or indebted but don't know to whom we owe that debt of gratitude while here

[ 29 : 14 ] God is saying it is him this is the God we owe our thanks to you you will not turn to him and recognize him and thank him for all the good he's given us the sun and the rain come on the good and the wicked alike says Jesus why because your father in heaven is kind even to the ungrateful and to the wicked this covenant that God makes is often known as the covenant of preservation because he's promising to protect his world from the full blown consequence of our sin

but something that will help us to understand the whole Bible is seeing that this is not something brand new something completely separate from what God's promised before because he says doesn't he he is establishing or confirming his covenant so even though God has not promised before to preserve the world from sin and its consequences he says he is still building upon his one single covenant purpose that began back in chapter three that promise remember that from the line of the woman would come an offspring a child who would crush the head of the serpent so take away sin and death forever that is the one single covenant promise that runs through all scripture the pulse beneath the wrist of the entire

Bible because all God's covenants are in fact outworkings of that one great promise and so here God is promising to uphold that covenant by preserving life on earth because life of course had to continue long enough for the serpent crusher to come and do away with sin forever and the rainbow is the perfect sign for that promise we'll end where we started shall we with the beautiful sign because the word that God uses is not rainbow it is simply bow as in the weapon bow and arrow I've set my bow in the clouds verse 13 and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth God is saying he is symbolically laying aside his weapon of war setting aside his just wrath against the world in order that life might go on you think about that next time you see a rainbow and notice which way the bow is pointing not down towards the earth but up into the heart of heaven when God's anger fell again on sin it would not be on the sons of Adam but on the son of God the serpent crusher himself the Lord Jesus Christ the rainbow reminds us he was faithful to his word even to death on the cross we saw lots of rainbows didn't we a year or two ago lots of rainbows painted in windows a sign of hope for people during the pandemic and while most people wouldn't have known it I think actually that was a really appropriate sign for people to cling to what did God see when he saw rainbows in our windows during the pandemic well in a world under the shadow of death God promised that he would remember his covenant somehow when people reached out into the darkness for hope they caught hold of the very sign that God created to remind us and himself of this promise to life in this world continuing and not coming to an end until

Christ comes to save that was only a sign isn't it how much do we long for people to know the reality to know our faithful God he who never ever breaks his promises he who keeps our world turning and he promises to make our world new when Christ comes again in glory for all those whose trust is in him let's praise him together as we pray let's pray together loving and gracious heavenly father we praise you as the faithful one he who has always kept his word whose promises never fall to the ground we thank you our father that you do sustain us and our world lord in the face of our sin and the rebellion that exists throughout our world that you have kept your promise father how we thank you for every good and perfect gift you give us and pray that you would give us hearts that are full of thankfulness to you and father how we pray to you for

Christ's return we pray with the saints throughout the ages come lord Jesus for we know that with your coming you will bring a new creation help us we pray by your spirit not to give up hoping for that day help us we pray not to doubt or to question your promise but to look back to what you have done in the past and to rest on every promise of your word and to look forward to the day when you come when we will stand in it give us this hope we pray in Jesus name amen