

God of Covenant

Covenants

Covenants are of fundamental importance in Scripture and in theology. A covenant is a solemn agreement that involves vows and promises made to one another. It is far more than a list of dos and don'ts or an outline of each other's obligations, it is a deeply ingrained commitment to develop the relationship expressed through the most beneficial means.

God initiated and entered into covenants with His people to cement His overarching purpose that 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people'.

We will see over the next few weeks through the covenants he made with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David just how deep His commitment to His people is and how faithful to his promises he remains despite the many reasons he has not to be!

Have you ever made a pact or a covenant with someone? How was it made? Did you 'seal the deal' somehow? What did it consist of?

Share what stood out to you or spoke to you from Sunday's message?

Is there anything from your discussions that needs to be acted on? (Accountability? Prayer? Care? Celebration?)

NOAH

Noah and the ark is a very familiar story for many of us. The danger of this familiarity is that we all too often miss some of the weight of the story and skim over details that add significance to its meaning.

So read Gen 6 – 8:19.

What struck you as you read those chapters? Anything you hadn't noticed before?

What is the picture of God painted by this passage?

Re-read Sunday's passage Gen 8:20 – 9:17

8:20-22

What do you think was the purpose of Noah's sacrifice?

Noah's sacrifice is a contrast to the reason God had just brought the flood. Creation had denied their creator. Noah's sacrifice begins this re-creation by making a fresh announcement that God is acknowledged as God.

The focus here is not how creation will change from the flood, but the focus is given to the heart of God.

Look at 8:21 and 6:6.

The human heart is shown to not change...always inclined to sin. Whereas the heart of God is shown to shift somewhat.

What does this tell us?

Does it indicate that God has changed? Was His first response ill directed? Is the flood God's attempt at creation version 2.0?

"The flood has effected no change in humankind. But it has effected an irreversible change in God, who now will approach his creation with an unlimited patience and forbearance. To be sure, God has been committed to his creation from the beginning. But this narrative traces a new decision on the part of God. Now the commitment is intensified. For the first time it is marked by grief, the hurt of betrayal. It is now clear that such a commitment on God's part is costly" *Walter Brueggemann*

The stunning beauty of this "even though...never again" covenant cannot be seen without the ugliness of sin and God's utter disgust of it. The God who rules over us has not changed in nature but has chosen to turn to us in a new way.

9:1-3

What does it say about God's commitment to creation that he restates the blessing he gave Adam?

Is there significance to adding the animals as food?

What is the wisdom in giving us responsibility for creation?

9:4-7

How does this section inform the question about whether God has changed?

God has not disowned his standards or lessened his expectations, he is as committed as ever to holiness.

What are the implications of v6 to your interactions with others? What are your struggles in this regard?

9:7-17

What is God's promise in this covenant?

What does this mean for Noah and subsequent generations?

Do you ever reflect on the significance of the rainbow when you see one?

The rainbow is said to be a symbol of peace/rest and Noah's name sounds the same as the Hebrew word for comfort/rest.

How does the covenant made here bring you comfort/peace?

How does this covenant lead you to respond to God?