

SESSION 54: RELEASE, DISPERSION, AND SACRIFICE

Genesis 8:15-22

December 29, 2024

PREFACE

The inclusio that ends in today's passage began back at the end of Chapter Six.

Read Genesis 6:17-20.

Keep your finger here in Chapter Six as we read the first portion of today's text.

Read Genesis 8:15-19.

RELEASE AND DISPERSION

First, it is God—*Elohim*—who utters the command to Noah to build and go into the ark. and it is *Elohim* who is about to release the inhabitants of the ark. This refers to the first member of the Trinity as the mighty, all-powerful God of Creation—“the Creator who is to be feared.”

Second, the language regarding the beasts is similar—not identical, but similar—to the first passage.

There is a thread, however, that is *different*—and I surmise, for a good reason. That thread is about *family*—specifically, the family unit. Note in 6:18,

“But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.”

There God mentions Noah's sons before Noah's wife: the pattern is, men, then women. Then notice how the beast's are designated in vv19-20:

“And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every **kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their **kind**, and of the animals after their **kind**, of every creeping thing of the ground after its **kind**, two of every **kind** will come to you to keep them alive.”** (emphasis added)

That word translated “kind” is *min* (meen), and refers to the various species. Now back to Chapter Eight, and look at v16:

“Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.”

Now the pattern changes to the family unit: Noah and his wife, followed by the sons and their wives. Then look at the end of v19; all of our versions except for the NIVs and the original KJV have the beasts emerging from the ark “by their *families*.” This is because a different word is used from the *min* in Chapter Six. Here it is *mishpaha* (mish-paw-KHAW), which means clan, a tribe, a circle of relatives—a family.

I could find no one to confirm my perspective on this (which has never stopped me before). We’re not talking about a doctrine-critical passage here; it is just that one wonders *why*—Why change the order of the humans, and why change the description of how the beasts emerge from the ark from how they went in? And I can think of at least one good reason.

A little over a year earlier its population entered the ark for one reason: to preserve a remnant of humans and beasts with which to repopulate the earth. At that time what was critically important was the need to preserve the two sexes of each species, so that each—human and beast alike—could “keep their seed alive” (7:3), to “be fruitful and multiply on the earth” (8:17).

That has been accomplished. Meanwhile, over the last year or so, the beasts, at least (there is no mention of human children, although one would assume...), the beasts have surely not waited for release from the ark before getting busy on this multiplying activity. One male and one female penned up together; the female goes into estrus, the male goes into rut; and nature follows its course. They don’t reason together, discussing whether it might be smarter to wait until release from the ark when they will have more room to grow. No, they just do what comes naturally—and now there is a family unit: a conjugal couple with the addition of offspring.

I have no doubt more beasts exited the ark than entered. And they now exit as family units, because, like the humans, they will disperse as *families*; they were called as individuals, they entered the ark as couples, they exit the ark with their offspring as an expanded family.

The humans as well exit the ark and, eventually, disperse across the land as individual family units. No more the pattern of men and women within the Noah family; now it will be Noah and his wife, Shem and his wife, Ham and his wife, and Japheth and his wife. No longer one, but now *four* family units.

SACRIFICE

Read Genesis 8:20-22.

v20

Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Tradition and Hollywood tells us that the ark contained just two—male and female—of each “kind” of beast; this is, of course, biblical, taken from Genesis 6:19-20. But just a few verses later, at the beginning of Chapter Seven, this is expanded.

Read Genesis 7:2-3.

That is, of “clean” animals (including birds)—the word is *tahor*, clean or pure, probably here in a ceremonial sense—Noah was to bring into the ark a greater number than the unclean animals. As we discussed in Session 47, opinions vary as to what is meant by the “by seven seven(s)” of the Hebrew text. Does this mean seven individuals or seven pairs? Because the text adds after this, “a male and his female,” I lean toward the interpretation of the ESV and the 2011 NIV, which have “seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate.”

At least one reason for the greater number of clean animals would have been to have an immediate supply for sacrifices. And that moment has now arrived.

I do not hold with those that say that because this is the first altar *mentioned* in Scripture, that altars heretofore had not been used. The *K&D* commentary, for which I have an immense respect, unfortunately expresses this position.

K&D: The sons of Adam had built no altar for their offerings, because God was still present on the earth in paradise, so that they could turn their offerings and hearts towards that abode. But with the flood God had swept paradise away, withdrawn the place of His presence, and set up His throne in heaven, from which He would henceforth reveal Himself to man. In future, therefore, the hearts of the pious had to be turned towards heaven, and their offerings and prayers needed to ascend on high if they were to reach the throne of God. To give this direction to their offerings, heights or elevated places were erected, from which they ascended towards heaven in fire.

I have problems with that on a number of levels. (I could spend the remainder of this session dissecting it.) For now I will let H. C. Leupold reply.

Leupold: That Gen. 4 does not mention an altar may signify nothing... To deduce from this first mention of an altar that prior to the Flood altars to raise up offerings to heaven were not thought of because God's presence was still manifest in the Garden, as the place of revelation, is building up too much conjecture on the mere silence of Scripture. We do not know whether the Garden continued to be God's place of manifestation after the Fall. We do not know whether altars originated now or in Adam's time. *Mizbéach* strictly means "the place of slaughter." This altar is raised to Yahweh, because Noah is mindful of the gracious fidelity which God in the person of Yahweh so mercifully displayed. This is an added argument for the fact that the offering was one of thanksgiving.

Whether it be called an altar built of stones, or just a cleared area in the scrub, Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, offered burnt sacrifices to Yahweh—one acceptable, one not (Genesis 4:2-5). It is clear that however it was implemented, man since Adam had offered up offerings to Yahweh—here, by Noah, clearly an offering of thanksgiving and praise for their deliverance, by the grace and mercy of God, from the Flood. 📌

I do, however, appreciate what the K&D commentary says about the sacrifice itself.

And I believe that impetus still dwells in the heart of God-fearing man today—whether implemented literally, or just verbally. In Christ we no longer offer up burnt offerings, but I recall a moment many years ago when, after writing a well-received production, my heart was so full with gratitude and praise to God, that I considered stepping outside and offering to him a burnt offering of the script. I didn't, mainly because I couldn't work out in my mind whether or not it would be—again, in Christ—somehow blasphemous.

K&D: In the sacrificial flame the essence of the animal was resolved into vapour; so that when man presented a sacrifice in his own stead, his inmost being, his spirit, and his heart ascended to God in the vapour, and the sacrifice brought the feeling of his heart before God. This feeling of gratitude for gracious protection, and of desire for further communications of grace, was well-pleasing to God.

Meanwhile, David Guzik points out the sacrificial “cost” angle to this moment.

Guzik: As is the nature with true sacrifice, this was a costly offering unto God. With only seven [14] of each [clean] animal on the ark, Noah risked extinction by sacrificing some of these animals. But costly sacrifice is pleasing to God.

Along with Pastor Guzik, I have always been impressed by King David’s position on this, expressed after his sin of taking an unauthorized census of Israel.

Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25. 

v21

I will wait till our next session to examine some of the important aspects of this burnt offering and the resulting covenant Yahweh cut with Noah. For now let us push on through the text.

Whatever the specific nature of this burnt offering, Yahweh was pleased by it—meaning, He was pleased by the intentions of Noah’s heart. This was done not by the dictates of a document or promise; the setting seems to describe an act of spontaneous, earnest thanksgiving and praise for Yahweh preserving Noah and his family through the year-long inundation.

And what follows is the text of what Yahweh said to Himself—to His heart (*leb*, LABE), the inner man—but what is also part of the covenant He cuts with Noah.

Verses 21 and 22 must be read carefully, digesting every word to understand what Yahweh is saying—and *not* saying—to Himself, to Noah, to us. The details of His covenant will continue through the first seventeen verses of Chapter Nine; these two verses are, effectively, a preamble, or preface to the whole. More accurately, it seems to be *in addition to* the formal covenant below—perhaps even separate entirely.

Speaking only for myself, personally, this is why today in this era I am uncomfortable using the word “sacrifice” to apply to any offering to God. For example, while I realize the author of Hebrews uses the phrase “...let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Hebrews 13:15), I would rather say an “offering” of praise. To praise and thank my God requires no “sacrifice” on my part; it costs me nothing—it is a *privilege*, not a sacrifice.

And Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma; and Yahweh said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.”

Although I initially was unhappy with “soothing” as a description of the aroma, the vapors rising from the offering, the more I thought about it, the more I realized it may be a pretty accurate description. We typically think of being “soothed” because of something wrong with us—say, a soothing ointment on a wound. Initially I thought this can’t be right, for there is nothing “wrong” with God. But an aroma from a righteous sacrifice might “soothe” or “quiet” the righteous wrath of God that had been played out over the last year. In this, Noah’s offering could play a part in quieting, calming, His demonstrated anger.

ESV and NIVs, “pleasing”

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Then Yahweh makes a promise—but it is not yet the promise we typically think of; that and the rainbow will come later in 9:15. Here Yahweh refers to what He said in 3:17.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In pain you will eat of it All the days of your life.”

Because of Adam’s sin, this physical earth was inflicted with a curse. Here Yahweh says that no matter what level of sin mankind exhibits, He will never *again* do what He did because of Adam’s sin. This does not remove the initial curse; that curse is still in effect today, and will be until the *new* earth in the Eschaton.

for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth;

Here is one of those statements that can confuse before it is understood. If Yahweh concludes that “the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” that seems reason enough for Him to do just the *opposite* of what He just promised. *Man will continue to sin, so keep doing what He did before!*

But here is one more example of God’s grace—yet in a slightly different form. If we think of this in human terms, this statement would be voiced with a sigh of resignation. *What more can I do? They’re just going to keep sinning.* But that’s how a human would express it.

Man’s incorrigible sin is not the *reason* Yahweh will withhold His curse; beneath the surface in this statement is something Job will echo in so many words: Because he is born with a bent toward sinning, *man will require a Redeemer.* ➡

Job 16:18-19; 19:25-27.

Here is how K&D explain it:

K&D: It was not because the thoughts and desires of the human heart are evil that God would not smite any more every living thing, that is to say, would not exterminate it judicially; but because they are evil from his youth up, *because evil is innate in man, and for that reason he needs the forbearance of God.* (emphasis added)

...I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

In this relatively short stretch of time since Creation, man has demonstrated time and time again that he will persist in sinning against a holy God. Even though there will always be personal consequences to sin, Yahweh vows that He will never again destroy *all* because of it.

Here is one more demonstration of God’s love for His Creation: Instead of universal punishment, He, Himself, will become the atoning sacrifice for their sins. ➡

Acts 5:31.

v22

Yahweh Himself translates this promise into verse, and Chapter Eight closes with it.

**“While all the days of the earth remain,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”**

This, which we might call the natural order of things, will proceed by the command of the Creator—and within it He places the hint that there will come a day when this earth will *not* “remain,” and this “natural” rhythm to life will no longer be necessary. ➡

The Revelation 21 & 22.

SESSION 54

Release, Dispersion, and Sacrifice

Genesis 8:15-22

Release and Dispersion

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