

Finding Your Place in God's Story of Redemption Winter/Spring 2015

Finding your Place in God's Story: The Covenant of Grace and Everyday Life - This class will take you step by step through the covenants of the Bible and help you understand the over-arching plot of scripture through the lens of God's Covenant of Grace. We will explore the aspect of God's covenant through its various administrations throughout the Old and New testaments and answer the question:

What does each sub-plot mean for our lives today?

What role do we play in God's story of redemption?

How does a promise made so many centuries ago to Noah, Abraham and David have an impact on my life?

The objective of this class is: to equip you with the confidence to read and understand scripture and find your place in the continuing story of God's redemptive grace.

- 1) *The Noahic Covenant: The Covenant of Preservation* – The entire created order is impacted by the Fall; there is no aspect of creation that is not. God establishes his right to be our King in the first two chapters of Genesis by disclosing that He alone is the Creator, and we the creature. The gulf between the two cannot be bridged unless He chooses to do so.

A point should here be made that there is no qualitative distinction between the natural world and the spiritual as if one were good and the other bad (or tainted). This distinction arises within Christianity, and continues to influence many believers today, but is unbiblical in origin. Both the natural world as well as the spiritual world are part of God's "very good" creation. This truth is brought home beautifully in the next covenant of scripture: *The Noahic Covenant*. We will consider four different aspects of the Noahic covenant, each is detailed below.

- 1) *Distinction between God's Common Grace and Particular Grace* – The beginning of the selection of Noah as a "second Adam" if you will, the one through whom the entire earth will become re-populated establishes God's grace as the fundamental means through which God relates to His people. Genesis 6:8 states, "*But Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord.*" This particular grace was the means by which God saved Noah and his family and allowed all others to perish.
- 2) *Preservation of all of Creation* – Though God used the destructive force of a flood to annihilate the unbelieving, preserving alive only Noah and his family and the animals brought into the Ark, God covenants to renew the provisions of creation articulated earlier in Genesis 1-2. God states to Noah, "*...I will never again curse the ground because of man...neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done... while the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease*" (Genesis 8:21-22). Michael Williams says the following about this passage, "*It is common for Christians to think of redemption in man-centered terms. That is to say, we limit the recipients of God's redemptive concern to human beings. Yet the Noahic story portrays God's concern as being as wide as all of creation, but not extending to each and every human being. Man is still the problem. In a real sense, the Noahic covenant stands the notion of a dualistic salvation on its head. Where the dualist seeks a salvation from the world, the Noahic*

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covenant suggests that the world must be saved from man". (As Far as the Curse is Found, Pg. 94).

Note too, that God reiterates the Creation Mandate. In Genesis 9:1 we read, "*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..."*"

- 3) *Universalistic in Application* – Every living creature (both those who are saved as well as unsaved and all animal life) benefit from this covenant (Genesis 9:9).
- 4) *Memorialized through a sign* – The Noahic covenant is memorialized through a universal sign between God and all flesh. This sign of the covenant is the rainbow in the clouds assuring all that God will preserve His creation and not destroy the earth again with the waters of a flood.

So, how does the Noahic covenant affirm the overarching Covenant of Grace? O Palmer Robertson offers an accurate and articulate answer. He states, "*The covenant with Noah provides the preservative structure by which God's purpose to redeem a people to himself may be realized...this ancient bond still provides the framework in which redemption may be accomplished.*" (The Christ of the Covenants, pg. 44).

- 2) *What does this mean for me?* As we continue on this journey of exploring the covenants of scripture it is helpful to observe exactly what relevancy the respective covenants have for us today. Think for a moment about the following questions. 1) How does the creation mandate and its renewal in the Noahic covenant influence how we see vocation? 2) What bearing does the promise that all of creation (including the natural world) will be redeemed have on the Christian's view of environmentalism and stewardship of earth? Let's flesh out the differences between common grace and particular grace. 3) How is the Creation Mandate fulfilled in my respective vocation?