

Pray

Graduation is an ending... but it is also a new beginning.

Take advantage of new beginnings in life... ask God to help you become who He wants you to be, who you want to be. Our God is a God of new beginnings.

In Genesis 9 we read of the second new beginning.

God starts over.

The original beginning was in Genesis 1-2, creation.

The first new beginning was after Adam and Eve sinned and were forced to leave Eden.

Gen. 4... things went badly.

Cain killed his brother and sin spread to all the human race such that God decided to destroy them all in the flood.

Now, following the flood we read of another, a third, new beginning.

God operates this way, because, apparently, we need new beginnings.

I. A new order for God's people. vs. 1-7

At first glance this seems to be an odd passage.

What is all this about blood? What about the animals being scared?

And, what does shedding blood have to do with the image of God?

So, let us look at what is written, and begin by reminding ourselves of what has just happened.

Because of the sinfulness of the human race, God has destroyed all life on earth by a flood.

All, except for Noah and the animals God brought on the Ark.

This flood was devastating, far beyond any disaster that you or I have ever seen... **Gen. 8:1**

So, God led Noah and the animals off of the Ark into a new world... a new creation.

And, Noah was thankful and worshipped God. **Gen. 8:20-22**

In this new creation, God gives His people direction as to how to live in it... a new order, a new way of living.

But, this new way of life is not wholly disconnected to what has been before.

Of the three aspects of this new order, the first is a reiteration of a blessing that God had spoken before. (Gen. 1)

1. We see this blessing in vs. 1. "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

In fact, this section begins and ends with this blessing. (vs. 7)

You might say, how is that a blessing? It sounds like a command.

But, did you know that all of God's commands are blessings?

This blessing/command is for us to fill the earth. Why? It is because God made it, all of it, for us.

And, it needs to be managed, cared for.

2. Second aspect of this new order: A new relationship and responsibility to God's creation.

Mankind is now allowed to eat animals.

But, not with the blood in them. We're not like the carnivorous beasts, tearing at their prey.

Eating meat is a gift from God and ought to be treated as such.

3. Third aspect of this new order: Man's new relationship and responsibility to one another.

Murder now requires punishment from man... death. Why? Because man is created in God's image.

Murder has already been a problem... Cain, and then Lamech (Gen. 4)

But killing people is not like killing animals. Why? Because people are not animals.

People, every single one, even helpless ones, have been made in the image of God.

Everywhere where people have forgotten this the result has been horrible... Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot...

And, so, if a person kills another person, like he would kill an animal... the murderer deserves to die.

All these things are connected by the value of life.

Life is intrinsically valuable... animal life, human life... especially human life.

This is foundational to understanding what it means to be a person. **Matt. 5:21-24**

In this new creation, God is beginning again in another way. He is making a new promise.

II. A new covenant for God's creation. vs. 8-17

We knew this was coming from the Lord. (Gen. 6:18, 8:20-22) Now we know what this covenant looks like.

This is the first covenant we read of in the Bible. In it we are learning more about this promise-keeping God.

We read something like it in Gen. 3:15. But, this is a prophesy not a promise.

Prophesy often tells us something that God is going to do.

God's promises do that as well, but a promise adds something else... implicit in a promise is relationship and blessing.

But, both the prophesy and the promise have to do with a God who is planning a salvation, another better paradise.

So God in Gen. 9, for the first time makes a promise, a covenant.

Let us look together at the nature of this promise, this first covenant that God makes.

This covenant is with Noah and all his descendants... that would be everyone!

And with all of creation.

His promise is that He will never again flood the whole earth to destroy it. And. He hasn't.

It is an everlasting covenant. It will go on forever.

He has made a reminder of this covenant... vss. 13-16

God is going to make more covenants as we move along in the Bible story.

In Genesis 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham... that is passed on to Isaac and Jacob.

God speaks to Abraham and then has him make a sacrifice of a bull, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a pigeon.

In this covenant God's plan of salvation becomes more clear.

He promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a new place... a promised land.

He promises that Abraham will be father to a multitude of children.

And, He promises that Abraham will be blessed to be a blessing to all the world.

Only this, Abraham is required to circumcise himself and his sons... the sign of the covenant.

In Exodus, God remembers this covenant and leads His people to Sinai to make another covenant with them.

In this new covenant that God makes with His people through Moses, God binds Himself forever to His people Israel.

He is going to teach them, bless them, fight for them, protect them.

But, this covenant will not be a one way covenant, His people have to make a promise to Him.

They have to promise to obey His commandments.

And, if they fail to obey His covenant, God Himself will become their enemy.

But, they did fail. God knew that they would fail to keep His covenant. He told Moses that they would fail to keep it...

...and Moses told the people of Israel before he died that they would fail to keep God's covenant.

Why would God make a covenant that He knew His people could not keep?

Is it because then He could show them grace and mercy? well, maybe. He did do that, over and over.

But, the real reason is that this covenant with Israel under Moses is not the end of the story.

It is not the final covenant.

There is another covenant, an even newer covenant that God was planning to make with His people.

This newest covenant is what we read about in the New Testament when Jesus, God Himself, came to make it.

We could look at any number of places in the Old and New Testament to read of this final covenant.

But, maybe the best place to look is in the book of Hebrews... the writer quotes from Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Heb. 7:26-8:13 Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant...

In this newest covenant God promises to be our God, and to forgive and transform us.

But, in it He still demands obedience from us. How then is it different?

Heb. 9:1-14 He gives us His righteousness through His blood.

So, we see the final note in a theme that began all the way back in Genesis with Noah and the Flood...

This new covenant is ratified, made possible, by the perfect blood of Jesus shed for us.

The Mosaic covenant was validated by the blood of perfect bulls and goats sacrificed for the sins of the people of Israel.

The Abrahamic covenant was initiated with a sacrifice.

And the covenant to Noah was in response to Noah's sacrifices after he left the Ark.

Blood runs throughout. Why?

Because in the blood is life... and ultimately God's covenant is about life... preserving life... my life, your life...

Nothing is as valuable as life. Even today, people who don't believe in God know that this is so.

But, sin is so bad that it inevitably brings death. We have seen that this is so in the opening chapters of Genesis.

We deserve death. How can we have life.

Ultimately God's covenants will bring Him to give His life so that we can have eternal life.

His life for our life so that we can have eternal life.

Our God is a God who makes promises. And, His ultimate promise to you is in Jesus Christ.

1 Jn. 2:25 And, God always keeps His promise.

How do you know you are a participant in this promise? **1 Jn. 5:7-12**