

Session 20 Review and Summary

The Wind, the Spirit, and a New Beginning

“Then God remembered Noah... and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.”

That word *wind* is an interesting one. In Hebrew, it's *ruach*. It's the same word used back at creation, where the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. All the way through Scripture—Old Testament and New—the words for *wind* and *spirit* are closely connected.

Even in English, you can still see traces of it. To *inspire* is to take in breath. To *expire* is to breathe out your last. There's something about breath, wind, and spirit that ties together.

I think about what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus asks how the new birth works, and Jesus says, “The wind blows where it wishes... you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going.” It almost sounds like, “Does that clear it up?” But that's the point—that's how the Spirit works. People are saved here and there. Sometimes in one church, sometimes another, sometimes through a radio broadcast. The Spirit moves, and we don't control or predict Him.

So here in Genesis 8, you have that same idea again. God sends the wind over the waters, and things begin to settle. It's like a new beginning, echoing creation itself.

The First Altar and the Soothing Aroma

Noah builds an altar. That's the first time Scripture explicitly mentions an altar being built. Abel offered a sacrifice earlier, but we're not told the details about an altar there.

Noah offers burnt offerings from the clean animals, and the text says:

“And Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma.”

Older translations call it a “sweet savor.” But what does that really mean?

When I think of a smell being *soothing*, I don't just think of something pleasant. I think of something that calms, settles, even appeases. If you soothe a wound, you're trying to bring rest to it.

That word carries the idea of appeasement—of something being settled down.

Think about the context. God has just judged the world. The flood has wiped out humanity except for Noah and his family. There is judgment, wrath, destruction. And then Noah offers this sacrifice.

The smoke rises. The offering is completely consumed—it's gone from the earth, given entirely to God. And in response, God speaks to Himself:

“I will never again curse the ground because of man...”

The sacrifice doesn't just smell good—it represents obedience, faithfulness, total giving. And in that, there is a settling. God's anger is, in a sense, appeased. There is a calming, a resting.

The Reality of the Human Heart

Right in that same statement, God says something striking:

“For the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

That hasn't changed. The flood didn't fix humanity. The problem is still there. This is the condition we live with until Christ returns.

And yet, alongside that reality, God gives a promise:

“While all the days of the earth remain... seedtime and harvest... shall not cease.”

The cycles of the world will continue. Seasons will come and go. There will be planting and harvest, summer and winter, day and night. Whatever disruptions happen here and there, the overall order of creation is sustained by God's promise.

A Restart: Be Fruitful and Multiply

When we move into Genesis 9, God blesses Noah and his sons and says:

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”

That should sound familiar. It's the same command given to Adam and Eve. This is a kind of restart. Humanity begins again through Noah's family.

God also says that the fear of man will be upon the animals. And we see that, don't we? Most animals don't calmly let us approach them. They scatter. There's a built-in awareness, a fear.

At the same time, God says, “Into your hand they are given.”

That's dominion again. Humanity is placed over creation, not to abuse it, but to manage it under God.

A Change in Diet

Then comes something new:

“Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you.”

Earlier, humans were given plants. Now, animals are included as food. There are no restrictions here—anything living may be eaten.

Later, under the covenant with Israel, distinctions between clean and unclean animals are introduced. But at this point, there are no such limitations.

However, there is one clear command:

“You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

Blood represents life. It must not be consumed. That principle carries forward and becomes very significant later, especially in connection with atonement.

The Seriousness of Life and Blood

God continues:

“Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.”

Here we see the establishment of capital punishment. Human life is sacred because man is made in the image of God.

Even animals are included in this principle. If an animal kills a human, its life is required. That idea shows up later in the law as well.

This is one of the first clear prohibitions given to humanity. Before this, the only direct command had been given to Adam—not to eat from the tree. After that, there were instructions like “be fruitful and multiply,” but not many prohibitions.

And that raises an important theological point.

Sin, Death, and Representation

Between Adam and Moses, people died. But there was very little law given during that time.

Paul explains this in Romans 5. Sin was in the world, but “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” That means sin isn’t counted in the same way when there’s no specific command being broken.

And yet people still died.

Why?

Because Adam acted as our representative. He made a decision on behalf of the human race. When he sinned, that affected all of us. We are born into that condition.

But here's the other side of that truth. When someone is in Christ, Christ becomes their representative. And what did Christ do? He obeyed perfectly.

So even though we are not perfect in our daily actions, our representative is. That changes everything about how we are viewed before God.

The Covenant with Noah

God then establishes a covenant:

“I establish my covenant with you... and with every living creature... all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood.”

This covenant is remarkable because it's universal. It includes Noah, his descendants, and every living creature.

It's also unconditional. There is nothing required from humanity to maintain it. God simply declares what He will do.

He will never again destroy the earth with a flood.

The Sign of the Bow

God gives a sign of the covenant:

“I set my bow in the cloud.”

We call it a rainbow, but the word used is *bow*.

That raises an interesting thought. A bow can be a decorative bow—or it can be a bow used with arrows. And the shape of a rainbow resembles a bow used for shooting.

Some Jewish teachers reflected on this and noted that the bow is positioned upward. If you picture it that way, the arrow would not be aimed at the earth.

The idea is that God has set His weapon aside. The bow is hung up, not aimed at humanity.

Some even suggested that if there were an arrow, it would be aimed upward—meaning that if the covenant were broken, the consequence would fall on God Himself. That's not stated directly in the text, but it reflects on the certainty and seriousness of God's promise.

God does not break His promises.

The Certainty of God's Promises

That same kind of certainty shows up elsewhere. When believers are given the Holy Spirit, it's described as a down payment—an earnest.

A down payment is a guarantee. If the one making the promise fails to follow through, the deposit is forfeited.

God gives His Spirit as that guarantee. Not because He might fail, but to show how certain His promise is.

In the same way, the bow in the sky is a visible reminder: God has committed Himself. There will not be another flood to destroy the earth.

And that's not religious language. That's reality. God is faithful. He keeps His word.