EVERLASTING LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Genesis 6:18; 9:8-17

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The first of the biblical covenants was the Noahic Covenant. The Noahic Covenant comes within the context of an anticipated universal flood as an act of judgment on sinful humanity. Scripture clearly records man's depravity during the antediluvian period (before the flood) (**Genesis 6:5**). Moreover, man's innate and continuous sinfulness was aggravated by the involvement of demons in human affairs (**Genesis 6:2; 2 Peter 2:4-5; Jude 6**).

Holy God regretted that He had created man on earth and was grieved in His heart (**Genesis 6:6**). The judgment would include not only man but nature too, because man had been sovereign over it. Thus, the animals, creeping things, and the birds of the air would be obliterated along with their human sovereigns.

The judgment of the global flood would not abrogate God's promise made in **Genesis 3:15**. Yahweh was and remains faithful to fulfilling His promise made in the Garden of Eden to our first parents. His redemptive plan would not be undermined by human wickedness nor even demonic endeavors to derail it.

Though the whole world was corrupt, Noah found favor (or grace) in Yahweh's eyes (**Genesis 6:8**). This was not due to any work that Noah did, but rather the fact that he believed God (**Hebrews 11:6**). Noah, like all other regenerate persons before the time of Christ, was justified by faith. Abraham was justified by faith, as was David (**Romans 4:3-8**). No doubt, Noah's wife, sons, and their wives too were believers. They believed Yahweh's word regarding His intentions – they entered the ark.

Genesis 6:9 records that Noah walked with God. The verb *walked* is routinely used for human conduct in Scripture. Noah's behavior shone like a bright light against the darkness of preflood civilization. His righteous conduct emanated from a redeemed heart.

The nature of the covenant with Noah is revealed in three passages in the Genesis account: **6:17-22; 8:20-22; 9:8-17**. "The earlier statements precede the actual inauguration and implementation of the covenant after the flood."[1]

[1] Irvin Busenitz, *Master's Seminary Journal*, fall 1999.

The Terminology

God announces the coming of the flood to Noah, but in **Genesis 6:18**, in contrast to sinful, unrepentant humanity, God made a covenant with Noah and his family. In the aftermath of the flood, God spoke in **Genesis 9:9** regarding the covenant He initiated and authorized. Professor Irvin Busenitz provides a literal translation of the Hebrew this way: "and behold I am utterly establishing My covenant with you."[2] The statement is emphatic by the fact that the first-person singular pronoun is repeated. This emphasis is reiterated in **Genesis 6:17**. We must note that Yahweh alone established this covenant. Man had no role in it whatsoever.

The Recipients

The covenant of Noah has the distinction of being the widest of all the covenants in terms of its universal scope. God planned and did wipe out the whole human race except the eight people in the ark. His pledge not to destroy the earth by a universal flood was made to all mankind and to the animal kingdom as well (**Genesis 9:8-11**).

The Sign of the Covenant

As many people know, the rainbow was divinely designated as the sign of Yahweh's promise to never again destroy the earth by a universal flood. Interestingly, the rainbow in the cloud was taken from nature itself, which had undergone the watery judgment. The rainbow was not primarily a sign to remind man, but to remind God (**Genesis 9:15-16**).

[2] Irvin Busenitz, *Master's Seminary Journal*, fall 1999.

The Duration of the Covenant

In **Genesis 9:16**, Yahweh utilizes the term *everlasting* (Hebrew: *Olam*) to depict the duration of the Noahic Covenant. The word *everlasting* can speak of time without end (i.e., eternity), but that is not always its meaning. The employment of the adjective is intended to underscore that the Noahic Covenant is not "temporary, or a stop gap"[3] one. It is a permanent one.

Furthermore, the context of the flood and covenant narrative helps us to discern *everlasting's* function. **Genesis 8:22** speaks of the regularity of nature and conveys that the covenant's duration is coextensive with the existence of the present earth. Other texts clarify the covenant's time limit (**2 Peter 3:10-11; Revelation 21:1**).

A Concluding Word

As stated elsewhere, the study of the biblical covenants reveals Divine character. One attribute of Yahweh's that is implicit in the Noahic Covenant is mercy. He is merciful in precluding a cataclysmic judgment by global flooding until His gracious redemptive work is completed.

It is to be noted that the withholding of such a judgment, or one comparable to it, applies to all men – redeemed or unredeemed. Moreover, this is evidence of His commitment to accomplishing the saving task embodied in the future covenants.

To Him be praised, honor and glory forever!

[3] John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan*, quoted in *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Fall 1999.