

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

As we move into chapter 9 of the book of Genesis, we go from those things which God determined in His heart, to those things which were verbalized directly to Noah. Verse 1 starts by saying, "And God blessed Noah and his sons..." When we live for Him, God blesses us every day with things we do not even realize are blessings. God gives us grace through even those tough times we bring upon ourselves, and this is why it's important we realize the third commandment, which tells us not to take the name of The Lord our God in vain, is not just about speaking His name. It's about understanding that what goes wrong in this life is not God's doing, it's man's; and more often than we realize, it is our own direct actions which cause problems. God didn't send the flood because He wanted to, but because of the corruptness of man. These words of blessing to Noah and his sons are truly a fresh new beginning for man's existence on this planet. That is one of the main reasons these words are so similar to the ones spoken at creation. Man had shown what his desires would be if simply left to them, and the result of man's desired lifestyle led to total corruption in just the space of about two thousand years. A man of God once came to the conclusion that God would do nothing but in answer to prayer; and while this is very true on a personal level, it's not so true on an overall human existence level. God would no longer wait for man to come to Him; God would use those people who desired His ways - such as Noah - to interact with all of humanity more directly. God still allows man his free will, so we should not believe everything or even most things which happen in this world are because God desires it to be that way, but God is constantly showing man a better way.

To be used of God is the greatest thing any human can experience. Thus, the fact God blesses Noah and his sons is an extra special thing. For God to speak to us directly is certainly to be used of God, and the next words tell us God said the things which follow, directly to Noah and his sons! Now, before we go on to what God actually said, let's not skip over the fact eight people survived the flood, but Noah and his sons only constitutes half of them. This again, emphasizes the point that God has laid the responsibility of leadership and care of the family upon

the male. Remember that at this time there was no government, and government is only a man-made extension of the family structure God gave to man in the beginning. First, there was family; then there was tribe; and then nations with Pharaohs, kings, presidents, prime ministers and the like. We have trouble getting government right because man's reach has far exceeded his grasp. Man has enough trouble being a good ruler of his own house which he is responsible for choosing how to put together. The last thing man needs to do is attempt to control an even more vast assortment of relationships and needs, but this is one of those things man insists on trying to do, and he wants to do it without God.

Each man came on the ark with a wife, and each man would now have to take his family into this new post-flood world. The question after such a drastic event is, what do we do now? Everything they knew before the flood was gone except what had rode with them on that ark. Before the flood, man had weighed his worth more and more against what the rest of society was doing, now that was all gone. What would guide life's choices now? To answer that question, God blesses them! The blessing was to tell them almost word for word the same exact things He told Adam and Eve in the beginning. First, they were to be fruitful. This is not about society and the building thereof. God wants us to be the individuals He created us to be. God only asks of us that we do more than just sit and smell the flowers. Being fruitful has to do with putting our hand to the things God created and doing something with the existence He has given each individual. God was saying, again, that man should let his creative juices flow! God demonstrated this in the beginning by planting the Garden of Eden. He did not speak it into existence; He planted it! (Gen. 2:8) Being fruitful has to do with these kinds of activities, and I believe this is another thing which emphasizes the fact "clean" animals is a reference to domestic animals, here in the flood story. God allowed some of the fruitfulness of man to be carried with them on the ark. God did not send the flood because man was being fruitful and creative. God did not want man's creativity to stop here in the post-flood world. God wanted it to be clear that what He was

judging was not the fact man had made changes to the world, but that man was unrighteous in his interactions with each other and God.

John talks about this in I John 2:15-17. What John is warning, to those who want to follow God, is that they should not get caught up with the things which are in this world. What he specifically says is that we should not love the things of the world. Why? Because, at the core, the world consists of three items. First, there are those things the flesh desires or lusts after. When we get hung up on the flesh's desires, we often care nothing for how we go about obtaining what we want. It does not matter to us what damage to others we do as long as we ultimately get what we want. The second item is the lust of the eye. Instead of working with our own hands on what we have in front of us, we often covet more. We see that others have something we don't or something we think is better, and that becomes our goal instead of being content with what we currently have. As bad as it is to chase our actual desires in life because of the unrighteousness it so often causes, it's even worse that we are driven to unrighteous actions in order to obtain or do things just because others have or are doing them. The third item is the pride of life. All this leads to the fact we have built a life here and we do not want to give it up. The things we obtain and the things we choose to do become our self-worth. Then it angers us when we have to give something up because it's hurting someone else and/or getting in the way of our relationship with God. Ultimately, it causes many to totally reject a relationship with God because we are angry that what John says in the next verse is true, or we get so caught up, we do not believe it's true. This planet, this universe, this existence and all we have obtained or desire to obtain, is not going to last. It's temporal, and that's a perspective which we have trouble with. It's hard for us to balance the fact God does desire for us to be fruitful, but we have to realize this is all like building sand castles on the beach. We cannot make what we obtain or build here our goal. Evening will come, and we will have to leave it all to be washed by the tide, back into just the beach it was before we ever arrived!

After considering all this, one might ask, how can a person be fruitful and be safe from the trappings man has created in this world? Well, again, we must see that it's the love of the things in this world which is wrong. We can use the things of this world, but to fall in love with this world is dangerous - to say the least. Plus, John makes another point in verse 17 which gives us the answer, and it's just what we started this segment talking about. To be used of God is the greatest thing a human can experience. We must live in this world, but we do not have to be of it. We can seek to do the will of God in our lives, and the fruit this creates is eternal. That is what we should fall in love with!

Getting back to the words here in Genesis chapter 9 verse 1, the next words we see are the true statement about child bearing. God told them to multiply. Did this mean they had to immediately go out and start having children? No. This is about letting them know the world could continue. God had told man, specifically Noah, what to do in order to get ready for the flood. He told him how to build an ark, when to board, and when it was safe to get off that ark. Man's life was not about his own choices during this time. Those who only followed their own choices perished in the flood. Now only those who had heeded God's

voice and followed His instructions remained. Here was the moment God was telling them life was truly up to them, once again. Without fear of continual or pending catastrophe, they could choose a path for their life in this world, once more. Not the least of this being the opportunity to bring more humans onto the planet which would lead to even more free wills doing their thing in this universe!

The next part of the blessing is to "...replenish the earth." This word is used here and in, what could be called its sister verse, Genesis 1:28. The emphasis of this word is not the having children. That was covered in the multiply part. This word has to do with filling or completing the earth. As we talked about so long ago, when we covered Genesis 1:28, God had made plants and animals all over the world; but He only made two humans and placed them in the garden. What God was saying to Adam and Eve was that going out into the world and exploring was what the world was created for. The earth is not complete without man. If man does not care that it's there, there is no point in it being there! The same is true here after the flood. God was putting the earth's systems back in order, and the world was springing new again. However, there was no point in doing any of this if man was not going to go out and explore it. Replenishing the earth does not have to mean there are people everywhere all the time, and God certainly did not want us to overpopulate the planet and kill it. What God wants of us is to realize the world is out there for us to enjoy, and we should do that. Again, we were not created to just sit in the garden and eat fruit or smell the flowers. We were created to interact with God and the world God created for us. This is why Paul explains in Romans 1:18-23 that in everything, God and His power is clearly seen.

One great difference between the post-flood world and the time God told these same things to Adam and Eve is that the animals were not populated all over the planet like they had been. Many species, because they had come through the flood on the ark with Noah, only existed right there where they had gotten off the ark. It would take time for them to fill the earth once again, but that is why Noah was told to let them go so they could breed abundantly in the earth. This fact is of interest to our study because it's here, after the replenish blessing, that the wording in Genesis 9 breaks off from the wording in Genesis 1:28. The earlier statement went on to tell man to subdue the world and have dominion over the animals. This would have been an interesting world to know. Before the flood, replenishing the earth had to do with going out and interacting with the plants and animals in a way which completed their existence. Subduing the world had to do with making the world what we wanted it to be. Having dominion over the animals was about using their abilities and unique attributes to create what we could imagine; but in the post-flood world, we were not told to subdue the planet. As we have talked about before, nature was getting more fragile each passing year. The strength and resilience the world was created with was drained by the ground curses God had placed on the world for man's sake. God would no longer continue to curse the ground for man's sake. (Gen. 8:21) As we talked about last time, what God determined was that the world would run its course from here, and what He would do is ensure that it did not become uninhabitable!

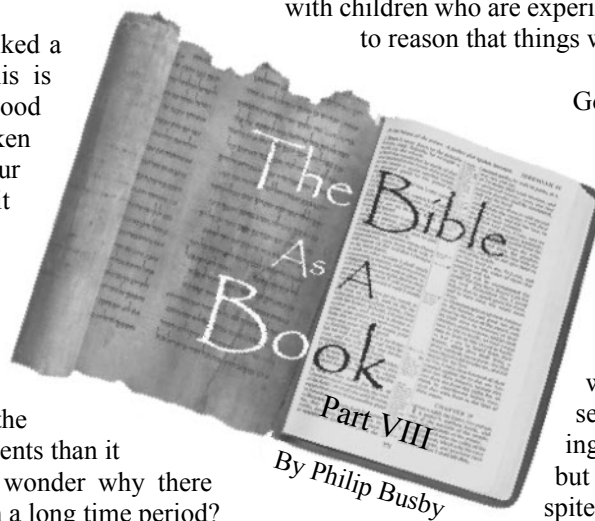
No longer could man afford to subdue the earth. The earth

In this study, so far, we have talked a lot about time, and time periods. This is mainly because we need to have a good view of the fact the Bible was not spoken into existence like the elements of our creation. The Word and the giving of it is part of God's continual interaction with mankind. Now, last time we talked about the idea of asking the question of why there is so much time in-between the Old and New Testament. The answer to this was covered in part by talking about the fact the Bible is more about the unfolding of events than it is specific dates, but some may still wonder why there would be no information given for such a long time period?

When we see God at work, we are viewing something quite different from man. Men change, even though people like to say, "people don't change." They really do. People change with time and age. What people desire one day is not what they want the next. What people think, is quite often shifted by the outside world, and by how much they are contained to a specific lifestyle or location. Most people are not, in reality, very aware of where they are going, and very few people have much of a plan for their life. Those who do, often find it difficult to carry out or accomplish that plan. This is, in no small part, due to the fact we are all very young. Sure, we may grow old in body and pass away, but no one today lives to be very old in comparison to those who lived before the flood; and even if we lived to be several hundred years old as they did, we would still be fairly young considering our existence was, from the beginning, meant to be never ending. Remember, it's only because man sinned that the sentence of death was placed on our physical forms, and that by removing us from The Tree of Life.

Because we are young, we are actually still learning and growing even during what we call old age. This is a great reason for us to fully follow God throughout our lives. No matter how old we are, without God, we are children without guidance. Being without God's guidance is precisely why so many people do, in fact, change, and change often; but not very often do they change in a good way. We see certain things happen around us and it changes the thought patterns in our minds. This happens very clearly to people in churches. As the world changes for the worse, just as the Bible told us it would/will, many people change what they believe about how to live righteously. They begin to allow the world to shift what they think about God's plan or how to serve in God's plan for their lives. People gauge what they can "get away with," against how far they are from the world. When the world moves down, the church often moves with it. This is because they do not realize the world should have no input on our development. Only the Words of God should be our guide as we grow and learn. We should understand, the more the world is corrupted by sin, the more it is nothing but a group of people struggling to make decisions without God. Which means you are dealing

with children who are experimenting, at best, and it only stands to reason that things will get worse and worse!



God is not like this. God is unchanging. (Heb. 13:8) His plan is the same yesterday, today and forever. Only He can guide us in the way we should develop, because only His plan and purpose for our lives has the eternal relevance He desires us to have a chance to fulfill. All this means, when we see God at work, we are seeing work based not on the shifting experiments of human behavior, but on a plan which is unchanging in spite of those shifts.

As we have already touched on in this study, the Old Testament has a core. That core is called the Torah, and it consists of the first five books. These books cover human history leading up to the time of their writing and the events which establish the nation which would be entrusted with the Word. (Rom. 3:1-2) In this core is all the relevant information for man to move forward through time, and be affected by the Word's existence. What follows it, and completes what we call the Old Testament, are books which tell us how this core affected later events. To us, it's history, but this touches again that point we talked about earlier. Our view should not just be about when it happened, but the fact it happened and unfolded the way it did.

There are many people out there who claim to be Christians, who have very anti-Jewish feelings. Many of these people would not consider themselves anti-Semitic, but they have negative feelings about Jews, nonetheless. I have talked to people about the fact I find it strange that it's so easy for people to think you are part of this group or that, when they find out you believe in holding the true Sabbath. However, I'm always amazed by how few think you might be Jewish. One day when talking about this fact with a particular individual, it was just astonishing that the question they were most interested in, and at the same time terrified to have answered, was, "You're not Jewish, are you?" Being part of an off base movement that still claims to be Christian worried them, but it was clear from their reaction that the thought we may be Jewish was far worse in their mind.

Now, of course, this brings us back to that argument which creates the ideas of Old vs. New, instead of Old combined with New. The defense for most of this is the simple idea that Judaism does not, as a religion, accept and teach Jesus to be the Messiah. What people do not often have a clear view of is that this fact does not mean Jews are not trusting God for The Messiah. The religious establishment of Judaism simply does not recognize Jesus as such. This fact, however, does not preclude the fact that God's ways are still God's ways. The Sabbath issue is not about any so called Christian organization,

nor is it about saying you believe Jesus is not The Messiah. It's about the fact God created six days for us to work, and the seventh day He kept for His purposes. In the law, He asks us to "Remember" this and keep the day holy. (Ex. 20:8-11)

My point here is simple, people are always incorrectly and inexcusably approaching the Bible from a standpoint of judgment. "The Jews got this wrong and that wrong. The Jews were judged for this and for that." Instead, we should be reading the whole story and seeing the fact, God told a man named Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. (Gen. 17:1-5) If we pay attention to the genealogy given in the Bible about Abraham's sons, we find many, many of the nations of the world could, in fact, claim a connection to father Abraham. What relevance does this have? The Jewish nation, as a people, are not, and have never been something different. They are what we all are. The difference is that to them was committed the oracles of God, and that makes them the lightning rod. Sure, they failed in many ways, but no more than any of us would have, and currently are! The Sabbath issue is an example of this. Most people claiming to be Christians do not keep the true Sabbath holy as the Jews do. Most Christians have been led astray and believe the day they primarily go to church is the Sabbath. That is incorrect! As we read the Bible, we should be thanking The Lord for the Jewish example, not judging as if it's a forgone conclusion we could do better.

So again, I repeat that the Bible is about viewing the events which happened and realizing we are all in the same boat. The core of the Old Testament gives the instructions, and the remaining books tell us what people just like you and I did with those instructions, how God attempted to get them to heed the instructions, how those people who attempt to follow the instructions interacted with, and affected the rest of the world, and ultimately the steps God took because of the choices everyone made! What this means is that the first five books came in a very short time period, for the purpose of establishing the Word, and God's specifically appointed nation with it. However, because the other books are about how those first five affected people and events over time, the rest of the books were written over a very long period of time. When thinking about the fact there is quite a bit of time between the Old and New, we should consider that there is actually significant time just in-between some Old Testament books; and what might be a more important thought is that because they cover unfolding events, significant time passes during the writing of certain books. For example, the books of I and II Chronicles covers a time span of over 430 years. These are not simply two books which were written one day before the history was lost, they are exactly what their names indicate. They are a chronicling of events as they took place in the land. The development of the Old Testament as a whole involves a good deal of time. There is far more time between that day God gave Israel the Ten Commandments and the last chronological events recorded in the Old Testament than there is between the Old and New Testaments.

This brings us back to the idea of people changing even if we think people don't tend to change. I believe one of the significant reasons we have this paradoxical thinking that people don't like change, don't want to change, just don't change, and the constant generational gap indicated by the fact older

generations often believe, "Back in my day things were different." or "We didn't do it that way." is explained in the book of Ecclesiastes. The preacher explains, there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecc. 1:8-11) We only think there is because things are lost and/or forgotten. It doesn't matter what level man's technology may be at, people are immature, and our nature keeps us making the same mistakes over and over. The real problem lies in the fact most people don't realize it. The world and its prospects look very different to a teenager than they do to an eighty year old. However, more than the eighty year old remembers, the world looked much the same to them when they were a teen, and the teen will think a lot like the eighty year old when they arrive. Generations see that what their fathers did didn't seem to work, or they consider it stale, so they try something they think is different, but all they're really doing is the same thing another generation thought was a good idea at their age sometime in the past. Unfortunately, the result of making the same mistakes over and over is not just that we make the same mistake and suffer the same consequences. It's more like hitting a hole in the road. Each vehicle which hits the hole makes it a little worse. This is the downward cycle of events man finds himself in. Each time, for one reason or another, a failed idea is tried once more, it has an overall worse affect than it had the last time. Sadly, people do not usually stick with a good idea for long enough to fix the damage, and this just becomes more and more the case each cycle. This because even though an idea may seem to fix the problem in the past, new generations don't see that their facing the same problem. Even when they do see similarities, the fact the problem is worse this time makes people think the solution won't work, or it isn't working because it's taking longer. In other cases, certain problems correct in spite of certain bad actions we take, not because of them. Then we think the same action will work next time, but the next time the problem does not correct in spite of the bad action. Instead, the bad actions truly do make the trouble worse. All this leads some to think things have changed in ways they really haven't, and others believe we can't change, when in fact people can, or we wouldn't keep going through the cycles which exist. What we need to do is walk forward with God instead of wandering in circles.

All this brings us back to the fact we are no more than experimenting children without God's guidance, and this is one of the reasons the Word was given in the first place. We often think of prophesy as being a threat God is making, when in fact, prophesy, more times than not, is just a warning about the end result of the course we are on if we don't change. Much of the Bible covers a significant time period in a specific nation's history because it helps us see we are not facing something new, we are headed down the same old road, once again. It records what Israel chose to do, what God had to say about it, and what the end result of their decisions to listen or ignore led to. In every case, God was right, and people who rejected God's advice ultimately suffered negative consequences. This not because God specifically created those consequences, the consequences are the reason God told them not to take the actions in the first place. If we would only study it, God's Word is a great help for knowing what actions we should not take in the first place, and which actions caused the negative results we experience in our lives. God wants us to grow out of being children, and learn how to live. He does not want us to just

blindly go through life expecting Him to make everything good. All things work for good, even if they are bad, for those called according to God's purposes, because with God's help, we can learn from our mistakes. (Rom. 8:28) Which is not something in the long term, we do good with on our own!

Also, this aspect of the Bible is helpful when it comes to those things which are out of our control. We are just individuals, and we cannot make everything around us good just because we do right. It's not an excuse by any means not to seek to be righteous in every way you can; but because people are often jealous or hateful toward the fact you desire to be righteous, evil can even increase because you are attempting to do right. It's not called evil for no good reason! One thing is certain, and that is, the more you are surrounded by wrong, the more it will not be physically rewarding to be right. (Matt. 24:11-13) In the here and now this makes life difficult for the true follower of God, because contrary to what so many believe, we cannot afford to go downhill in our righteousness just because the world does. If we study God's Word, we find day by day how to separate what is happening to us because we are doing wrong in some way, from what is happening because those around us are doing wrong. There may be nothing we can do to change our government or the decisions of those who are over us at work, but the Word will help us understand and even be prepared for the results of decisions made outside of our control. Without the Bible, we may just think what is happening around us is some kind of current event; but with the Bible, we should realize we are just going through a repeating, worsening cycle of human destruction. If God's Word was followed by all, the cycle would not keep going down, but that is not the choice man has made. Thus, someday, just as God did with the flood of Noah's day, (Which we know about because God told us in His Word) God will have to step in and put an end to the cycle altogether.

All this relates to the gap between the Testaments, because there was only so much point in showing us this cycle over and over. The result of a continual downward cycle is more than apparent in the Old Testament's stories; and even with God renewing Israel at times in order to keep them afloat, it's still apparent in the opening story of the New Testament. At the chronological close of the Old, Israel was struggling to re-establish its nation on its native soil, after returning from the Babylonian captivity. God gave Israel a new opportunity, but the Babylonian Empire had already fallen to a "new" empire. In the opening story of the New Testament, we find yet another empire has taken charge, and Jesus' birth would take place in Bethlehem, because the ruler of this newest empire had ordered all the Jews back to their home cities to be taxed. In-between the empire which was in charge at the close of the Old Testament and the one in charge at the opening of the New, there was even another empire, but not because of anything we hadn't seen before!

In all this, there is the point that Daniel did in fact see all this in his visions. Each empire was laid out and illustrated in the form of a beast. They would each be nothing more than man's continual failing, yet repeated attempts at ruling the world from one central location, which God put an end to at the Tower of Babel. This because it's a terrible idea for one human

or group to think they are wise enough to rule the world. The only way this idea is going to work is if God comes down from heaven in the form of a man, and is the man to rule the entire world. Well, that is exactly what the Bible tells us will happen in the ending millennium or so, of this planet's existence. (Rev. 20:1-10)

This brings us to another fact which should not be missed when talking about the time gap between the Testaments, and that is the point: there is also a far bigger gap between the end of the New Testament unto this present day than there is between Old and New. Old and New only have about four hundred years, but from the time of this writing back to the end of the New, we are approaching two thousand! Now this is not a thought which comes through most people's minds when talking about this subject; and I believe, once again, this is an issue which shows to what extent people do not see the New Testament is not really new. It's just a continuance of the events the Torah was established to bring about in order to handle man's choices. The Old Testament said all these things would happen, and the books of the New Testament were put into our cannon of Scripture because they confirm the first step of the greatest and most direct interaction God will have with man, on this planet, has taken place. The Messiah has come, and fulfilled the prophesied events we were already told would happen. This is why the real difference between true Christianity and Judaism is not that one is Jewish and the other is not. It's not that one is old and the other new. It's not that one has replaced the other, or that those who hold to the beliefs of one are on their way to heaven and the other to hell. The true difference is simply a matter of where in the prophesy time line each one believes we are! True Christianity believes Jesus is The Messiah, and awaits His return. Judaism is still looking for the coming of The Messiah, which they will rejoice in when Jesus returns. In truth, there is not a lot of difference between these beliefs, and most of the differences which actually do exist are wrong on the Christian side not the Judaism side. I can say this without malice because I am a teacher on the Christian side of the argument.

The fact we are not as different at the core as many believe, is not as clear as it should be because, as I have mentioned before, Christianity doesn't speak in the right terms. Using more non-Jewish terms, Christianity says, "Jesus is the Christ." The term "Christ" - not to put to fine a point on it - is Greek in origin. There is not really anything wrong with that from the standpoint that Jesus was/is what "Christ" means, which is to say Jesus is, "Anointed" or "The Anointed One." However, the more appropriate Biblical understanding comes from talking about The Messiah. Again, we have come to one of those moments when - if you are paying attention - we are talking about the fact the New Testament cannot stand on its own. If the New is not taken in the context of the Old, it's just a story like any other Greek, Roman, or you fill in the blank, story about an extraordinary character in history. However, if we look at it in the context of the Old Testament, we see The Messiah has come! We understand the work He did in light of the Old Testament prophesy. The puzzle starts to have a much clearer picture, because prophesy is not meant to tell us exactly what is coming, but give us the information we need to recognize what is unfolding as events take place. Thus, the only way

to know if you truly should believe in Jesus, is to know your Old Testament and see if those things described in the New about the life and nature of Jesus, shows Him to be The Messiah!

Now, getting back to the issue of there being more time after the New until now than there is between the Testaments: we should realize the New Testament only exists for the purpose I just pointed out above. The New Testament is a strainer of sorts which dipped into the pool of time and assured the story of Jesus' life got permanently recorded for historical reference. Just think about it. God is not slack concerning His promises. (II Pet. 3:9) If God said He would send The Messiah, He is going to do it. Just as we await the return of The Messiah today, and have waited for a very long time; so too, those who knew their Scripture before Jesus' life, were looking for The Messiah's coming. This is one of the reasons Matthew 1:18 puts it so casually in saying, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:..." The fact it was going to happen was never in doubt - at least in the true believers mind! Many people lived and died without ever seeing the promise fulfilled, and they are just fine with their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. However, it was very special for those who lived long enough to actually be alive when it happened. (Luke 2:21-39) Now those of us who live after the events are in much the same boat as those who lived before. The New Testament was written for the sake of giving us the information needed to realize we are on the other side. After all the centuries of waiting, not just the four hundred years which passed between the Testaments, but the millenniums which passed since the day Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, The Messiah has come. We hold on to that fact and study the New Testament in order to be assured of it. On this side, we have waited about two thousand years, on the other side there is about four thousand!

Through our last few segments, the question we really have been working on is the question of what separates the Old Testament from the New? One of the answers to many, would seem to be this time issue we are talking about; but when you look at what the New Testament truly is, you find there is no reason at all to separate the Old Testament from the New. God gave His Word among men, and He did this by giving it to and through a specific nation. In saying this, what we are truly referring to, is the fact God gave Israel the Torah! The rest of the books from thereon are the unfolding events. The relevance for writing these events down - though it may have seen some gaps of repeating cycles not worthy of attention - does not end with the last chronological book of what we call the Old Testament. The Scripture ends with a final bit of prophesy we know as Revelation!

Daniel had his vision and learned of many specific things which would unfold, but when Daniel sought to know what the end would be, he was told, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12:9-10 Those words which were, "...sealed till the time of the end." are the words John received and wrote down. Daniel is not the last chronological book of

what we call the Old Testament. Many events would unfold from there until the time of the coming of The Messiah. Those events which were specific to our understanding of how the children of Israel came to be back on their land after the Babylonian captivity, was given before the Old Testament chronologically closed, and that set the stage for understanding why Jesus' parents were where they were, right on the land the prophecy said The Messiah would come to. The New Testament takes us through the story of Jesus' life and the events which followed His ascension. Mostly, events secular history would never properly record, because they were specifically about those who understood what had just taken place, and they took that message to the world. Today, true believers in The Messiah, are simply continuing that work until the day Jesus returns!

What the New Testament ends with, both by book order and chronology, is the Revelation Daniel sought but was told was sealed until the end. Revelation starts with specific messages to the churches; but when it truly heads into the prophesy part, what do we see? A scroll with seven seals! (Rev. 5:1-5) These seals would be opened because the time of the end which Daniel was told needed to come had come. People are always talking about the "end times," well I got news for you, we've been living in the "end times" for a long time now. God, of course, knew this would be true, and this is why He warned us, time to Him is not what time is to us. (II Pet. 3:8) He also warned us not to think, because it has been so long by our standards, that we can get away with turning back from righteousness. (Matt. 24:44-51)

John's vision took place just at the end of the first century A.D. Between what was revealed to John and the words from Daniel I just quoted above, there is about 634 years. From John to where we are now, is an obvious fact I have already mentioned. Bottom line: the gap between the New and the Old is not really relevant. The Torah was complete long ago during the establishment of the nation of Israel. The New Testament is simply part of those books which follow the Torah, which confirm to us that no matter how much man keeps repeating, God is watching and interacting. It doesn't really matter how much time is in-between any of the books, anymore than the fact some of them overlap. The last chronological book of what we call the Old never came to a place where it said, "That's it." However, the last book out of them all, both Old and New ends by saying this, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Revelation 22:18-21

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 2

simply would not take it. If God was going to ensure that as long as the earth remained there would be seedtime and harvest, winter and summer, man could not be allowed to be the complete ruler of this planet. God was keeping more of the control in His hands, because man had proven he would only destroy more and more. We certainly see the truth of this today! Thus, instead of telling man to subdue the planet and have dominion over the animals, God begins an explanation about how things would be a little different. In this explanation, God tells Noah the world would be a little more adversarial, going forward. This because man's thoughts are evil from his youth. In a way, the planet would protect itself from man's destruction by being more standoffish. In verse 2, God tells Noah and his family, specifically, the animals would "fear" and "dread" man.

This is a very interesting change. Imagine a world where animals were not just out there in the wild where we could capture and use them, but a world where the animals almost had an anticipation of human arrival! Before God made Eve, the Word tells us God brought all the different kinds of animals before Adam to see if there was one which would stand out as special and be a helpmate. Some people like to say dogs are man's best friend, but some people can't stand dogs and greatly prefer cats or something else altogether. No, there was not an animal found to be a true helpmate for Adam, so God made a second human. Because this human was a female, Adam had not only another human to interact with, but a special relationship which could bring more humans onto the planet. All this being true, the animals are still a part of the replenishing aspect of human life. Animal existence does not mean much without us. I know many people would disagree with this idea, but the Bible clearly supports it. It was for man all these things were made, and the flood emphasizes this fact. God only saves the animals because there were people who were going to survive the flood.

Animals do a great work in nature, and they are in many ways spectacular in their abilities, but their core existence is for us in the same way our existence is for God! Animals, before the flood, anticipated service in a world of man's making. In the same way your family dog anticipates the return of a family member who has been away, animals in general would have anticipated the arrival and interaction of humans. This is why it's so sad when people mistreat animals. Animals were created to serve. It was only after the flood that God instilled in them the survival instinct of fear and even dread of man. This is why especially wild animals tend to run or, at the very least, seek a place to hide or be out of reach when they see humans. Because man's desires are evil from his youth and God was going to continue to allow man his free will, animal survival would depend on this fear and dread. This is another example of how destructive sin is!

The last words of verse 2 are, "...into your hand are they delivered." This is that adversarialness I was talking about. Man is no longer ordered to subdue the world or have dominion over the animals. Instead, there would be a new relationship between man and animals. From now on, the animals would fear and dread humans and into man's hand they are delivered. What does it mean for the animals to be delivered into our hands?

Many would say the answer is simply about the aspect that in the next verse, God gives man permission to eat the animals the way we eat plants; and while this is true, to some degree, it's not the only thing we should get out of these verses. Here, we are seeing more of that policy shift we talked about last time. God is not changing; He is changing the dynamics of our physical lives a bit in order to bring us back to His unchanging plan for our existence. That's the beauty of a temporal world, it can afford to be flexed and reshaped in many ways. In doing this, you are not affecting the eternal plan of God, because this world will someday pass away completely. This is why man can be allowed a free will even though he often uses it for unrighteousness. It only took man around two thousand years to become so corrupt that God had to do something more about it; but on the flip side, it took around two thousand years before man became so corrupt God had to do something more about it.

Everything from the time God determined the end of all flesh had come before Him, unto now, has had more of a finality to it. The flood and the need for the ark was a great example to man about how much man should not be looking for redemption of this life, but salvation from the death it inevitably brings. We need to get the point! No longer is the world in a last forever mode. No longer is physical life about a long term ever sustainable thing. The world is fragile and can be destroyed very easily. Even the animals are not simply waiting to be used in some creative way by us. Instead, they play their part in the natural world and try to avoid us when they can. We can still choose to use them in creative ways if we want to. However, from the flood forward, just as man could pick the fruit of the tree, vine or bush; harvest the field of wheat; dig up a potato or carrot to eat; man could now go after animals, shed their blood and eat them! If that sounds dramatic and gruesome, it should, and it was intended to be so! There is a big difference between man subduing the planet and having dominion over the animals, which is a caretaker role, to a world where the animals are delivered into man's hand!

The animals had, since the time of the fall, served as an example to us of the dynamics of sin and death. This issue is at the core of what happened between Cain and Abel. Cain brought an offering of plant material. This was what he should have brought - it was out of his increase; but Abel also brought what he should because Abel raised animals. The problem for Cain was that God's acceptance of a blood offering was more physically spectacular than a plant offering. This would continue to be true right up through the time of the tabernacle and later the temple. If the temple stood today, it would still be true that blood offerings or sacrifices would be burned, and most plant offerings are not, or only a small portion. Why? Because of the blood!

Just as humans, animals shed blood when they are injured, and we can only lose so much of it before it simply does not matter how good a condition the rest of our body is in - we will die! Now, all parts of our body go through cell replacement, which technically means a large portion of our body is replaced with new cells from time to time; but in no case is it as crucial that constant purifying, oxygenating, and replenishing happen, as with blood. We think of the heart as a most vital organ which we cannot afford to see stop, but why? Because it circulates the

blood. We desperately need our kidneys and liver to function. Why? Mostly because of what they do for and with the blood. We can't stop breathing. Why? Because we need the oxygen in our blood. We put food in our stomach so that it can put nutrients in our blood. Everything works together in our body, but the blood is the connective reason why it can work at all!

Plants do not work on this same principle; thus, animals are more representative of our existence. God said He would give over the animals into man's hand; but the counter balance to this is that, unlike plants, the animals would dread and fear us, making them less useful for our fruitfulness. The policy shift is in the fact everything talked about from here on out is pointing to a time when our lives, this planet, this entire creation will end. It's pointing us to the fact that what we accomplish here, our physical existence, is not as important as our relationship with God and those things eternally in His plan. One of the reasons the flood took place and man was given a path of escape and survival, in spite of the fact God said the end of all flesh had come before Him, (Gen. 6:13) is that everything originally had been setup for immortality instead of mortality. What God told Adam was that in the day humans ate the fruit of the Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would surely die. (Gen. 2:17) However, God had allowed man to live out a natural life span without the Tree of Life's sustaining power, instead of bringing an immediate death sentence upon man after they had disobeyed. This gave most humans hundreds of years to live on this planet before they faced death. The point in this was so man could choose to repent and come back to the ways of God. Man was going to die someday, but man showed he had too great a tendency to ignore this fact and still live a great deal of his life in an immortal thought pattern. We still have big problems with this fact today; but at the time of the flood, God determined man's days would be capped at 120 years. After the flood, we would see the ages of men drastically drop from things such as 700, 800, and even 900 years to more of what we see today, and throughout our man documented history. We have a much smaller span of time in which to fool ourselves into thinking we will never die. Generations pass very quickly, and before we know it, we have went from being the kids helping our grandparents do chores to being grandparents ourselves!

God, in this life, wants us to grasp the fact we will not live here forever! There is no reason to be high and mighty about the fact we are alive, because it only lasts a short time. In the midst of the factors which directly affect our life span, we also took a step down from our human throne of dominion. By putting the animals in our hands and putting fear in them about us, even human physical existence became, more than ever before, simply a part of the temporal world. Since the beginning, animals live and die, eat and are eaten, while humans stood in dominance over it all. After the flood, our physical existence would fully join this cycle!

In "modern times," the eating animal thing doesn't impact some people as it originally did. Today, many people - in what man likes to term "developed" countries - still eat meat, but they get out of the gruesome task of butchering their own meat. Instead, they simply go down to the local market and buy what

they want. So true is this, that many people do not even have a clue where any of their food comes from, and how necessary agriculture is to their lifestyle. There are many people who would likely not eat as much meat if they had to be the ones to put the knife to the throat of the animals, make the slice, and watch the blood flow. There would be even less meat eating if everyone who ate meat had to actually go out into the wild and hunt for the animal, and this brings us to a crucial point. Some may ask, how could God have given permission to eat animals when there were so few of them left at the time? The answer is that the animal's numbers were not likely threatened by God giving Noah permission to eat animals right after the flood. This is because Noah and his family did not likely eat any of the animals. Noah being a righteous man and the leader of his family, meant his family had probably never gone against God's instructions that plant material was to be man's food. (Gen. 1:29) They probably had never eaten animal flesh before, and it's not likely something they would have relished doing just because they now had no mandate against it. They had brought plenty of seed with them on the ark, (Gen. 6:21) and even though it would take time for them to grow crops, there was only eight people living in the entire world. If the dove could find enough not to return to the ark when she did, I'm sure there was enough growing in the world to sustain eight people without the need to eat animals.

In fact, it's possible flesh eating was not a widespread practice until people felt they needed to, and they did not need to do it until they started attempting to live in harsher climates where animal meat may have been the only source of food during certain parts of the year. We know from the verse we just covered that God still wanted man to go into all the world and replenish it. God was not going to leave the lack of food as an excuse for man not to do such a thing. Man clumping together - as they later did at the Tower of Babel - had nothing to do with food scarcity, nor the limits God had put on man's diet. Now, somewhere along the line, later generations did begin to kill and eat animals just because they wanted to; but this likely did not happen until a great deal of the animal population had a chance to grow in number.

There is also the fact that since God put fear in the animals toward man, it was/is not quite as easy for man to catch and/or kill an animal in the wild. Until certain wild populations became more abundant, it was not worth hunting animals for a food source. Also, again, there is the domestic animal idea which God allowed to come through the flood. Man did not need to go to the effort of hunting and killing wild animals when he had domestic animals, and knew he could domesticate new species of animals. Remember, certain people may have lived in caves for shelter, but man was never a knuckle dragging underdeveloped half brain. One would think man didn't want to kill his domestic animals until he had destroyed them all; thus, he would have taken the time to build and manage domestic populations for the purpose. It is our disconnected from reality, sinful, modern lifestyle which causes us to become fools! (Rom. 1:22)

Until next time, Shalom!