

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXXIX : GENESIS 8:15-22 – THE FLOOD: NOAH DEPARTS THE ARK AND OFFERS BURNT SACRIFICES

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE — Along with my usual references, this and the following Flood lessons will be using much material from ‘*Grappling with the Chronology of the Genesis Flood*,’ Steven W. Boyd & Andrew A. Snelling, editors; Master Books, Green Forest AR; first printing 2014; sixth printing 2022. The translation used in these next few studies will be from this resource.

Episode 3, Scene 4: Genesis 8:15-17; **Theme:** *God’s instruction for Noah and his family, as well as all land-dwelling and flying creatures, to come out from the Ark and to repopulate the earth.*

¹⁵ And God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶ “Go out from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and the wives of your sons with you. ¹⁷ All the living things that are with you, from all flesh: flying creatures, and beasts, and all the swarming things that swarm on the earth, bring them out with you, and they will swarm on the earth. Be fruitful, and become numerous on the earth.”

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 15 – Then God spoke / to Noah, saying:

v. 16 – ‘Go forth from the ark, / you

and your wife, / and your sons and your sons’ wives / with you.

v. 17 – Every living thing / that is with you

of all flesh / — flying creatures and animals

and every creeping thing / that creeps on the earth — / bring forth with you,

that they may breed abundantly on the earth, / and be fruitful and multiply / upon the earth.’

v. 15 – And God spoke to Noah, saying, — Here *’elōhîm* because this revelation belongs to all the earth. “It is still Noah with whom God deals. The whole scheme of salvation has centred on him; his sons are beneficiaries, but not partners until chapter 9.” [Kidner, 92]

v. 16 – “Go out from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and the wives of your sons with you. — Note that while Noah knew the waters had dried upon the earth just under two months ago (the first day of the first month, 8:13, until the 27th day of the second month, 8:14), he awaited Divine command to exit the ark. “The third divine speech instructs Noah to disembark from the ark. It parallels the command to enter the ark (7:1), except the configuration of the family is cited specifically here. *These eight are the new humanity, and the future of the blessing remains with them. Those who entered the ark successfully rode out the storms and were delivered intact by the mercies of God. For the long year of rising and receding waters, Noah received no word from the Lord. He had waited and waited yet did not anxiously exit until given the heavenly word to disembark. As Calvin remarked, Noah ‘did not move a foot out of his sepulchre, without the command of God.’*” [Mathews, 1:390]

v. 17 – All the living things that are with you, from all flesh: flying creatures, and beasts, and all the swarming things that swarm on the earth, — ‘Living thing’ (Hebrew, *chayyāh*, usually translated ‘beast, animal’) has also in this instance a general signification. The general statement is followed by details: flying creatures, animals, etc. [Cassuto, 2:115]

bring them out with you, — Earlier it was said ‘*and you shall come*’ (Noah and his household, 6:18) followed by ‘*you shall bring*’ (the creatures, v. 19), so here after the injunction ‘*Go forth*’ (Noah and his family) comes the order ‘*bring forth*’ (the creatures).

and they will swarm on the earth. Be fruitful, and become numerous on the earth.” — “The sense is: ‘*Permit them to go forth in order that they may be able to breed abundantly and be fruitful and multiply.*’ At present there are only two of each kind, but in the course of a short time they will breed abundantly and be fruitful and multiply.” [Cassuto, 2:115] “The commands given originally just to the fish and the birds (1:20, 22) are here extended to all the land animals, one of many hints in this story that the post-flood era represents the start of a new creation.” [Wenham, 1:187]

Episode 3, Scene 5: Genesis 8:18-20; **Theme:** *The exodus from the Ark by Noah and his family, as well as all the land-dwelling and flying creatures; and Noah’s construction of an altar and sacrificing of an offering to God.*

¹⁸ And Noah and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him went out. ¹⁹ All the living things, all the swarming things, and all the flying creatures — all that swarms on the earth according to their kinds came out from the ark. ²⁰ And Noah built an altar to YHWH, and he took from all the clean beasts and from all the clean birds and he offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 18 – *So Noah went forth, / and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives / with him;*

v. 19 – *every beast, every creeping thing, and every flying creature, / everything that moves upon the earth, by their families / they went forth out of the ark.*

v. 20 – *Then Noah built / an altar to the Lord, and took — of every clean animal / and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings / on the altar.*

v. 18 – *And Noah and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him went out.* — Once again the order of the words is changed, and as in v. 16, there is no cryptic reason but another example of variation for its own sake, with a view to stylistic elegance and nothing more. “*These may be taken by the Western reader as tedious repetition, but the report style of Hebrew narrative shows Noah’s obedience, a feature repeatedly ascribed to him throughout the flood account. In contrast to his generation, Noah as a ‘righteous man’ believed God and obeyed his command both in entering the ark (7:1) and in departing.*” [Mathews, 1:390] “*As almost a second Adam (9:1) he steps into a virgin world washed clean by judgment, and the spectacular deliverance in the ark is seen as a mere preliminary to salvation proper, which is a new creation.*” [Kidner, 92f]

v. 19 – *All the living things, all the swarming things, and all the flying creatures – all that swarms on the earth according to their kinds came out from the ark.* — This verse begins with the same words as v. 17 in order to create a parallelism between the command and its execution. We have here again a general statement followed by details, and also the usual variation of style.

according to their kinds — there is an important change in the Hebrew word for ‘kind’ from the word translated ‘kind’ in the Creation narrative (Gen 1:11, 12 [2x], 21 [2x], 24 [2x], 25 [3x]) as well as even its earlier usage in the Flood narrative (Gen 6:20 [3x]; 7:14 [4x]). “Noah’s animal menagerie exited the ark ‘one kind after another’ (v. 19). Although this reminds us of the creation refrain ‘after its kind’ (*mîn*), the different Hebrew word in v. 19 for ‘kind’ (*mishׁpāchāh*) points ahead rather than to the past. ***It is the typical term for human ‘families’ and anticipates the genealogies of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, which delineate their descendants by ‘families’ (10:5, 20, 31; also 24:38, 40; 36:40). The same term is found in God’s blessing on Abraham by which ‘all peoples’ (‘families’) will be affected (12:3; also 28:14).***” [Mathews, 1:390] ***Some English translations capture this change, ‘after their families’ (NKJV, ESV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, YLT Amplified, et. al.) or ‘in their groups’ (NET, Holman Christian Standard Bible, several paraphrases, et. al.).***

HENRY MORRIS: THESE ANIMAL ‘FAMILIES’ SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD — “As both animals and men later radiated out from Mount Ararat, they found open country ahead of them. They could move east into Asia, west into Europe, south into Africa. Some of their descendants found a land bridge across what is now the Bering Straits into the America. Others found a similar land bridge down the Malaysian Straits into New Guinea and perhaps Australia. Such land bridges are known geologically to have existed during the Ice Age, when there was a considerable lowering of sea level due to the vast amounts of water stored in great ice sheets. Modern computer studies have shown, interestingly, that the geographical center of the earth’s land areas is located within a short distance of Mount Ararat, a ‘coincidence’ that can hardly be other than providential.

“Lack of competition permitted animal population to multiply very rapidly; so there was much incentive for the different groups to keep pressing forward until they found an ecological niche for which they were more suited than other groups. These conditions (rapid multiplication, small inbreeding populations, rapidly changing environments) were ideal to permit rapid variation to take place in each kind. Consequently, different varieties could rapidly develop and become established in appropriate environments.

“Although God had implanted genetic factors for wide-ranging adjustment and variation in each created kind, permitting them to adjust to many different environments, nevertheless this potential variation was limited. Never could one kind change so much that it would become a different kind; ‘after its kind’ was the divine principle. Since the environment was so drastically different after the Flood, there were many kinds of animals, especially those that were highly specialized or unusually large, that found it difficult to adjust. Finally, after a number of generations, these became extinct. Included in this group were the dinosaurs, the pteronodons, the creodonts, the glyptodonts, and other bizarre creatures of the past.

“Many of these extinctions probably took place during the Ice Age. The sharp change in temperatures following the Flood ... led to the buildup of great thicknesses of snow and ice near the polar regions. These eventually radiated out in the form of tremendous ice sheets, covering northern Europe and reaching down into the northern third of the United States in this hemisphere. The Ice Age probably lasted several hundred or a thousand years (not several million years, as believed by evolutionary geologists) and undoubtedly had a profound effect on the earth’s animal kinds.” [Morris, 214ff]

v. 20 – And Noah built an altar to YHWH, — *Significantly, Noah’s first act after emerging from the ark is to worship God. “The true worshiper, who by God’s grace escaped the catastrophe, thus confessed his submission to and dependence on God through sacrificial worship.”* [Ross, 197]

THE FIRST MENTION OF AN ALTAR — *altar*, Hebrew *miz^ebēach*, used in the OT of the altar of burnt offerings and the altar of incense. From the root *zābach* ‘sacrifice, slaughter;’ thus ‘a place of sacrifice, a place of slaughter.’ [Skinner, 1:157] Used 401x, mostly in the Pentateuch and historical books. **“Although worship was known from the days of Cain and Abel (4:3-4; also 4:26), this incident is the first account of an ‘altar’ erected for that purpose.** Here worship is specifically directed ‘to the Lord.’ This same language describes the patriarchal custom of building an altar for worship wherever the fathers resided in their sojournings, especially Abraham, who constructed his altar ‘to the Lord’ (12:7-8; 13:18; see also 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7; there is no occasion where an altar was built in the Joseph cycle). **Noah then was the pious forerunner of Israel’s fathers both in terms of physical ancestry and in veneration of Israel’s God, Yahweh.** Moses perpetuated this practice even before the tabernacle construction, following his victory over the Amalekites and, more importantly, later in the ceremony ratifying the Sinai covenant (Exod 17:15; 24:4; cf. 20:24-25). Moreover, the Sinai directives for constructing the tabernacle’s bronze ‘altar of burnt offering’ and for levitical sacrifice share the language of our passage: ‘altar’ (e.g., Exod 27:1-8; 38:1-7), ‘clean animals’ and ‘clean birds’ (e.g., Lev 20:25), and ‘sacrificed burnt offerings’ (e.g., Exod 24:5; 32:6; Lev 17:8; Deut 12:13-14). [The] horned altar of the tabernacle was commonly described as ‘the altar of burnt offering’ (e.g., Exod 30:28; 31:9; 35:16; 38:1; 40:6, 10, 29), making Noah a prototype of Moses, who made sacrifice in the wilderness. Although Noah’s altar is not described, the first audience would have assumed it conformed to the Mosaic legislation requiring all temporary altars be constructed of ‘earth’ or ‘unhewn stones’ (e.g., Exod 20:24-26; Deut 27:5-6).” [Mathews, 1:391f] **The point is that worship of Yahweh was viewed as an organic unity.**

and he took from all the clean beasts and from all the clean birds and he offered burnt offerings on the altar. — *As with the word ‘altar,’ this is the first mention of ‘burnt offerings.’ ‘Burnt offerings,’* Hebrew *‘ōlāh*, the noun occurring 286x in the OT, coming from the root *‘ālāh* ‘to go up, climb, ascend.’ The common explanation for the rendering ‘burnt offering’ is that the smoke goes up or ascends to God; however since there are other sacrifices which are burned, it is probable there is some further concept involved in the root being used in this manner. One thing might have been that some sacrifices were burned partially and eaten either by the worshipers and / or priest; whereas the ‘burnt offering’ was wholly burned (TWOT, word # 1624c; p667, suggests ‘whole offering’ might be a better rendering). Since this offering was wholly burnt, it indicated the person’s complete devotion to the Lord.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRIFICES? — Noah’s offerings served multiple purposes:

“It is ... wrong to see propitiation and thanksgiving as mutually exclusive interpretations of the burnt offering. It both made atonement (Lev 1:4) and served as an act expressing the total dedication of the worshiper to God (the whole animal ascended to God in the smoke). Both ideas are appropriate here.” [Wenham, 1:189]

“But whenever the whole burnt offering is presented, the motive is joyful, indicated by the fact that this holocaust is called a freewill offering (Lev 22:17-25; Num 15:1-11). It is

anything but dour. In addition to expiation, this sacrifice serves at least two other functions. It is connected both with petition (1 Sam 13:12) and with thanksgiving (Lev 22:17-25; Num 15:1-11). As such the whole burnt offering is ‘all-encompassing; it answers to all the emotional needs of the worshiper.’” [Hamilton, 1:307f]

“Homage, dedication and atonement are all expressed in the ‘burnt offerings’: the new earth is to be God’s, if He will have it.” [Kidner, 93]

Episode 3, Scene 6: Genesis 8:21-22; **Theme:** God’s reception of the sacrifice and His resolve to never again bring about a curse on the ground because of man, or the total destruction of life on earth; or to permit an interruption of the times and seasons.

²¹ And YHWH smelled the soothing scent, and YHWH said to Himself, “Never will I curse again the ground on account of mankind even though the intent of the mind of mankind is evil from his youth; and never again will I strike all life which I have made. ²² From now on, all the days of the earth, seed [time] and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, will not cease.”

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

***v. 21 – And when the Lord smelled / the pleasing odour,
the Lord said / in His heart,
‘I will not again / curse anymore
the ground / because of man,
for the imagination of man’s heart / is evil from his youth;
neither will I ever again / destroy every living creature
as I have done.***

***v. 22 – While the earth remains, / seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat, / summer and winter,
day and night, / shall not cease.’***

v. 21 – And YHWH smelled the soothing scent, — TO ‘SMELL THE PLEASING SCENT’ IS TO ACCEPT THE ONE OFFERING THE SACRIFICE — “This is the only time the LORD is actually recorded as having ‘smelt’ a sacrifice.** David prays that he will (1 Sam 26:19), while Lev 26:31 (cf. Amos 5:21, 22) declares that God will not ‘smell’ the offerings of the disobedient. *For God to ‘smell’ a sacrifice implies his acceptance of it and the offerer.*” [Wenham, 1:189; see also Waltke, 142; Skinner, 1:157] “Noah’s sacrifices are burnt offerings, whose flesh is wholly burnt and not eaten. Only the odour reaches the throne of the Lord – a thing without substance. Undoubtedly, the reference is not to the smell of burnt meat, which is certainly not pleasant, but to something more important. To understand the Scriptural concept of smelling the pleasing odour, we have to consider such passages as Amos 5:21 [the literal rendering of which is]: ‘I will not smell (to wit, a pleasing odour) on your solemn assemblies.’ If the prophet, who comes to declare that the Lord has no desire for the oblations of the people who transgress against Him, says, ‘I will not smell,’ it means that it was possible for Him to smell, but He does not wish to do so.... The expression ‘He smelt an odour’ had already lost in Hebrew its original and literal signification and acquired a figurative connotation, such as: ‘He received favourably,’ ‘He esteemed the inner intent of the sacrifice.’ In Psalm 1 we read: ‘Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,’ the meaning being: **‘Do not think, as do the Gentiles, that

God derives material enjoyment from what you offer to Him, and that He eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of hegoats; instead offer to God a sacrifice that is pleasing in His sight, namely, an oblation that expresses your thanksgiving and is indicative of the feeling of gratitude in your heart.’ Such was Noah’s offering; hence it was pleasing to the Lord.” [Cassuto, 2:118f]

A PLAY ON NOAH’S NAME — “‘Pleasing aroma’ (*rêach hannîchōach*) is another sound allusion to the narrative’s motif of ‘rest’ (*nûach*) and ‘Noah’ (*nōach*; cf. 5:29; Luther’s etymological rendering ‘odor of rest’ makes his point, ‘at that time God rested from wrath.’). The translation ‘soothing aroma’ (NASB, REB) best reflects the idea of ‘rest’ or ‘appeasement.’ (BDB *Lexicon* has ‘soothing, tranquilizing odour,’ and KB *Lexicon* reads ‘smell of appeasement.’) Here we have the several sound plays on the name ‘Noah’ brought together. Through the ‘soothing’ offering (*nîchōach*), God is brought to ‘rest’ (*nûach*) by ‘Noah’ (*nōach*).” [Mathews, 1:393] ***“It denotes rest intensively; the rest, not of mere quietude, or cessation, but of satisfaction, complacency, delight. An ‘odor of rest’ – of complete and gratified acceptance.”*** [Lange, 1:323]

CONTRAST THE PAGAN FLOOD NARRATIVES — In sharp contrast with the pagan flood accounts, the Mesopotamian gods ended the flood because of their ‘ravenous hunger’ since they had gone without man’s gifts during the flood, then gathering ‘like flies’ around the sacrifice once offered. [Kidner, 93; Waltke, 142]

(Cassuto) the Lord said in His heart, – (Boyd & Snelling) and YHWH said to Himself, — “A decision reached with Himself. Compare the expression to His heart in the account of God’s decision to bring the Flood (6:6); the two verses parallel each other.” [Cassuto, 2:119]

THE IMPORTANCE OF NOAH’S SACRIFICE — “*The Septuagint paraphrase, ‘having considered,’ explains clearly the intended connection between the sacrifice and God’s resolve.* God’s heart at the time of the Flood is full of pain because of people’s sin (6:6). Human sin inflicts pain upon God’s heart only because he graciously humbles himself to become fully involved with humanity. Now that pain and indignation is assuaged by the atoning sacrifice.” [Waltke, 142] Connect this observation with what follows.

“Never will I curse again the ground on account of mankind even though the intent of the mind of mankind is evil from his youth; and never again will I strike all life which I have made. — “The clauses are parallel:

‘I will not add to curse again the ground ...

I will not add again to destroy all living creatures.’

The Lord makes two related vows: not to ‘curse the ground’ (v. 21b) and not to ‘destroy’ its inhabitants (v. 21c). The divine reassurance ‘never again’ (v. 21), repeated twice in this short pronouncement, is heard further in the formal covenant that follows (9:11, 15), where the Lord has this same compassion for impotent humanity.” [Mathews, 1:394]

“Never will I curse again the ground on account of mankind — This is not to imply there is an alleviation of the ‘curse’ brought on by Adam’s sin (as some have thought); there is no new age of blessing following an age of curse. The language of 8:21 is tied to 6:5b, not the Edenic curse in 3:17, showing that God’s vow reflects on the punishment of the deluge (8:21 has *qālal*, ‘curse,’ rather than *’ārar*, ‘curse,’ as in 3:17). ***Here the Lord is promising not to add to the original curse on the ground; the flood was a punishment over and above that decreed in 3:17. Rabbi Cassuto translates it, ‘I will not again curse anymore the ground because of man;’ and comments the Lord promises “not to add thereto, that is, not to aggravate further man’s position on earth. ‘I will not curse anymore’ – more than it is already cursed.”*** [Cassuto, 2:120]

(Cassuto) neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. – (Boyd & Snelling) and never again will I strike all life which I have made. — ‘never again,’ Hebrew, ‘ôdh . The meaning is that the Lord would not bring universal retribution upon humanity as He did in the days of Noah: ‘I will never again destroy,’ i.e., ‘I shall not destroy a second time by a flood.’” “God’s second vow to postdiluvian humanity is his refusal to ‘destroy’ the earth’s inhabitants. ‘Destroy’ (nākhāh), also translated ‘strike down’ (NJB, NAB), is not the same term uttered in the divine threats before the flood (6:7, māchāh ; 6:13, 17, shāchath). It is the common term for slaying a person or beast (e.g., 37:21), subjugating a people (e.g., 14:5), or bringing on plague (e.g., 19:11). It occurs once more in Genesis 1-11, also spoken by the Lord, when he promises to avenge any person who ‘kills’ Cain (4:15).” [Mathews, 1:396]

(Cassuto) for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; – (Boyd & Snelling) even though the intent of the mind of mankind is evil from his youth; — THIS IS A DIFFICULT VERSE — While not immediately obvious, there is a real difficulty presented here. What is the problem? Prior to the Mabbûl, the Lord gives the following reason for the judgment to come:

‘The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’ (Gen 6:5 ESV)

Now after the Mabbûl the Lord gives the following reason for His promise not to judge the world in like manner:

‘I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.’ (Gen 8:21 ESV)

‘So ... the reason for never again destroying the earth in like manner is the same reason for sending the Mabbûl in the first place?!? How are we to reconcile these comments?’

● **THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN AFTER THE MABBÛL DID NOT CATCH GOD ‘OFF-GUARD’ —** As unbelievable as it might seem, there are commentators that interpret this as God being frustrated ‘because the Flood has not really worked. It has destroyed the human race, but it has not changed human nature. Post-Flood man is also a reprobate. In retrospect God sees that he has acted unwisely and too simplistically. But happily he admits his mistake and is willing to learn from it.’ [Hamilton, 1:309; quoting D. L. Peterson, ‘The Yahwist on the Flood’] *Such an analysis hardly deserves a response when the Scriptures are considered as a whole. However we are to understand this conundrum, that cannot be the answer.*

● **IT CANNOT BE DENIED THAT THE LORD’S CHANGE OF DISPOSITION IS CONNECTED TO THE LORD’S ACCEPTANCE OF NOAH’S SACRIFICE —** *“The obvious implications of the sequence of verbs ‘the LORD smelt ... said’ is that God’s thoughts about mankind were prompted by his appreciation of the sacrifice.... [It] can hardly be denied that it was God’s appreciation of the sacrifice’s ‘soothing aroma’ that prompted the promises of v. 22.... The LORD’s assurance that ‘never again shall I smite every living thing as I have done’ is prompted by his smelling the burnt offering and the observation that the ‘ideas of a man’s mind are evil from his youth’ (8:21). What previously had been cited as the reason for the extinction of all flesh is now declared to be God’s motive for its preservation. Evidently the priestly-mediatorial role of Noah and his sacrificial offering has profoundly influenced God’s attitude to mankind.” [Wenham,*

1:189, 206] *“Noah’s sacrifice too was an appeasement in behalf of all postdiluvian humanity as well as an offering of thanksgiving (Jubilees 6:1-2 has Noah offering atonement for the ‘guilt of the earth.’). As Job mediated for his family, Noah was priest for the postdiluvian world. The role of Noah as the second Adam is coupled with the imagery of Moses, who mediates for the people of God (cf. Exod 32:32). From the narrative it was Noah’s offering for atonement that prompted God to declare his new intentions toward the sinful earth, despite human propensity toward sin.”* [Mathews, 1:393]

● **GOD’S RESPONSE TO THE SACRIFICE WAS NOT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS NOAH BUT WAS DIRECTED TOWARDS MANKIND IN GENERAL** — It might be misunderstood by the previous comments that God’s change in attitude is speaking specifically of Noah, but that is not what 8:21 is asserting. From the very start *‘Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD’* (Noah *‘walked with God;’* 6:8, 9; 7:1; 8:1; cf. Heb 11:7). *“It is God’s attitude to mankind in general that is turned around: 8:21 stands in particular contrast to 6:5 – ‘The LORD saw that the evil of man was great in the earth and every idea ... of his mind was nothing but evil all the time.’ Now, for the very same reason, the LORD declares he will not curse the ground further. And the only hint the narrative gives for this change of heart is ‘God’s smelling of the soothing aroma.’”* [Wenham, 1:190]

● **FROM THE NT WE KNOW CHRIST IS THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT OF ALL OT SACRIFICES, BUT WE CANNOT REJECT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MOSAIC CULTIC EXPERIENCE** — “Ultimately, of course, the acceptance of every sacrifice depends on God’s antecedent gracious purpose, whereby he appointed the sacrificial system as a means of atonement for reconciliation between God and man. A fundamental principal of the Levitical law is *‘I have given (the blood) for you upon the altar to make atonement for our souls’* (Lev 17:11). *But this is not to deny sacrifice’s importance; rather it is to assert its real efficaciousness, because God has declared it so and promised to respond to it.* Looked at in this light, we can view Noah’s offering of sacrifice as a prototype of the work of later priests, who made atonement for Israel, or of Job, who offered burnt offerings for his sons and for his *‘friends’* (Job 1:5; 42:8). Here, however, Noah’s sacrifice is effective for all mankind.” [Wenham, 1:190]

● **SIMILARITIES WITH NOAH AND MOSES** — In understanding this paradox, we might consider a similar example found in the book of Exodus as Israel leaves Egypt. Being rebellious, the Lord says He will not be with Israel:

‘Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.’ (Exod 33:3)

Yet we see later the Lord does go up with His people:

‘And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”’ (Exod 34:8, 9 ESV)

So the reason for divine judgment, *‘for you are a stiff-necked people,’* is subsequently cited as a justification for his mercy. *“How, before God, can a sinful world (in general) or a sinful people, even God’s chosen people (in particular), exist without being destroyed? Each time the answer is given that if the sin is answered solely by the judgment it deserves, then there is no hope. But in addition to the judgment there is also mercy, a*

mercy which depends entirely on the character of God and is given to an unchangingly sinful people. Furthermore, in both narratives the role of the mediator is vital, whether it be Noah or Moses. This mercy is shown through a man who is chosen by God and whose right response to God, whether through sacrifice or prayer, constitutes the necessary medium through which this mercy is shown.” [Wenham, 1:191] *“Thus, for the very reason that man is completely unable to save himself, therefore God saves him! Truly, He is the God of all grace!”* [Morris, 217]

● **MANY UNDERSTAND ‘FOR’ TO MEAN ‘EVEN THOUGH’** — Several English versions bring this out in their translations; e.g., *‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’* (Gen 8:21 NKJV) The sense is that although judgment is warranted, God will exercise clemency. *“‘Even though’ – The gracious character of this so-called Noahic covenant is underscored by the divine promise, despite the continuing presence of human sin deserving judgment.”* [Waltke, 142]

● **ANY AND ALL MERCY AND GRACE EVER EXHIBITED TOWARDS MANKIND BY GOD IS ULTIMATELY BASED UPON THE WORK OF CHRIST** — *“If God seems too lightly propitiated, this arises partly from the simplicity of the style, partly from the inherent limitation of all Old Testament sacrifices, ‘which can never take away sins.’ The real propitiation, in the mind of God, was the sacrifice of Jesus (Rom 3:25, 26).”* [Kidner, 93]

● **ONLY INSPIRED WRITERS WOULD DARE ALLOW FOR SUCH AN APPARENT ‘CONTRADICTION’** — *“Noah’s offering had made the difference, not changing God, but placing man in a different relation to him as viewed under a changed aspect. He is the ‘poor’ creature, as well as the ‘guilty’ creature.... The greatness of man’s sin reveals the greatness of the divine sorrow on account of it. The sinner, too, is allowed to feel it, and make it a ground of his pleading for forgiveness; as the Psalmist prays, Ps 25:11, ‘*pardon mine iniquity, for (kî) it is great.*’ In that passage, too, some would render kî ‘*although*,’ to the great marring of the force and pathos of the supplication. Christ did not die for small sins. *It is a peculiarity of the Holy Scriptures thus to set forth unshrinkingly the sharp contrasts, as we may reverently call them, in the divine attributes. None but inspired writers could venture to do this; and how boldly do they present them! – often, too, in closest connection without betraying any fear of cavil, or charge of inconsistency. The tremendous wrath, and the most melting mercy appear in the same chapters, and sometimes in immediately succeeding verse.*”* [Lange, 1:325]

v. 22 – From now on, all the days of the earth, — Both negatively (v. 21, ‘never again’) and positively (v. 22, ‘I will sustain the earth’) stems from unmerited grace. The Lord will providentially preserve the earth, its ecology and its environment until the final judgment (1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 2:5-12). *“Instead of destruction, the earth will be blessed with the regularity of predictable environmental patterns that are undergirded by the directive hand of God (v. 22). This promise is dependent upon the goodness of God and not the righteousness of humanity, for humanity will always languish in sin. The only condition established is temporal, ‘as long as the earth endures’ (v. 22).... This shows a permanency for the world, but it also infers that the present heavens and earth will someday cease.”* [Mathews, 1:396f]

seed [time] and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, —

The daily and seasonal rhythms will be maintained is a mark of his continuing providential blessing on the world. “The NIV’s rendering (as most English versions) arranges v. 22 in poetic stanza. The figure of merismus (opposites) dominates, indicating the inclusiveness of all seasons and times. The agrarian seasons, necessary for the sustenance of life, are represented by ‘seedtime and harvest.’ ... ***Biblical religion explained that the seasonal cycle was the consequence of Yahweh’s pronouncement and, moreover, evidence of a divine dominion that transcends the elements of the earth. There is no place for Mother-earth in biblical ideology. Earth owes its powers (not her powers!) to the divine command. ‘Cold and heat’ with ‘summer and winter’ are chiasmic and essentially parallel to the seasons of seed and harvest, which are marked by these changes in climatic conditions. ‘Day and night’ is the concluding pair and show that they too are at the command of the Lord, who here guarantees their punctual arrival (cf. 1:3-5). Nature will not act capriciously but will be timely and predictable (‘will never cease’), giving security to the world and its inhabitants.***” [Mathews, 1:397; see also Cassuto, 2:121f; Wenham, 1:191]

will not cease.” — “Another parallel to the story of Creation. The verb *shāvhath* (‘cease’) comes near the end of both sections, and here specifically as an assurance that the order of Creation would not be changed. Although God *ceased* (from His work) after He had completed the task of creation, yet the world He created and its natural order would not *cease* while the earth remained. The reference, of course, is to total and universal cessation, for it is obvious that a partial interruption of the normal order may occur in many instances. In years of drought, sowing and harvesting come to a stop (Gen. 45:6: ‘*and there are yet five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest*’); so, too, the children of Israel are commanded to refrain from any agricultural work during the seventh year; and in the plague of darkness that came upon Egypt (Exod. 10:21–23) there was no difference between day and night. But in all these cases there is only a temporary, localized intermission.” [Cassuto, 2:123]