

RAINBOW: CURSED BLOOD

GENESIS 9:1-17 OCTOBER 6, 2021

The closing scenes of disaster movies like *Wall•E* or *2012* or *The Day After Tomorrow*, are often brimming with optimism. Things have gone very badly, but as the runtime draws to an end, triumphant music begins to play beneath the visuals as the survivors emerge into the dawn of a new day. These lucky few have not only made it through the catastrophe, they've finally learned from all their mistakes. Though there will be a lot of work to do, the outlook is all positive.

After more than a year aboard, it was time for the survivors to leave their floating home. Coming off the ark they must have wondered what sort of world awaited them. What comes next? Were they going to be placed into a new Garden, like their ancestors Adam and Eve had been? What role would sin play in this new world? After all, hadn't God washed all the wickedness away and weren't Noah and his family called *righteous* by God? Noah *had* approached God as a sinner, bringing a blood sacrifice in his thanksgiving offering in the last passage, but only God knew what the new arrangement would be and He had indicated that He was going to make some changes.

In our text, God explains that, despite the cleansing effect of the flood, sin *would* continue to spread through the earth. Terrible violence would return and we humans would have the responsibility - among other things - of keeping that violence in check. And so, in Genesis 9, the foundations of government are established. At the same time, a world of opportunity is presented to the Faithful 8. Best of all, God reveals an unlimited and ongoing covenant of His powerful grace.

Genesis 9:1 - God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

It would have been enough to survive the flood, but God goes further. He *blesses* Noah's family. The Christian life is not just about last-minute survival - meaning it's not just about escaping hell and getting into heaven. That is, of course, the most *eternally* significant, but walking with God is a *blessed* life. We see it in Genesis. We see it in the Law, in Psalms, in Proverbs, in the Beatitudes, in the Epistles, in the Revelation. God's power and purposes and prescriptions are for every aspect of your life so that you might be full of His blessing (which isn't the same thing as material abundance that is so often pursued in this world). Jesus explained what blessing means in His Sermon on the Mount. It means that we will receive the Kingdom and inherit the earth. We'll receive comfort and we'll see God. We'll be filled and shown mercy. Compile the references in Scripture about the blessed believer and you find that God wants these blessings to permeate your heart, your relationships, your family, your endeavors, all that you do. *Even when* life is hard, resources are few, bodies are sick, or enemies surround, God's *blessing* is available to those who follow Him.

The Lord repeats the directives He gave to Adam and Eve: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. For these 4 couples, this was an awesome responsibility - a lot was riding on their shoulders. But, as usual, God's commands reveal things about Himself. First: that He would be involved in continually protecting and sustaining humanity. Second: that He loves for His people to be *fruitful* and leave a

Godly mark on the earth. That's still His desire, by the way, that *you* be fruitful and fill the earth with *spiritual* children by being a part of this huge disciple project in the Church age.

Though the directive was very similar to what Adam and Eve had received, this time around there were a few caveats.

Genesis 9:2 - ²The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority.

Some commentators believe that, before the flood, humans had a much more direct ability to rule the animals. But now God is signaling that things have changed. Because of sin, this new world was going to be one that was full of fear, contention, conflict, and death. Animals would now fear men. Scientists point out that even apex predators, with all their immense strength and ferocity, fear man.¹ And verse 3 gives one reason why:

Genesis 9:3 - ³Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything.

For over 1,000 years, men had been vegetarians. Or, at least the *Godly* people had been. Now, there was nothing off the table and, in fact, meat would be a necessary part of the food pyramid.

Now, remember: The original audience of Genesis was the Children of Israel. Moses would give this book along with the rest of the Law, which would demand quite a few dietary restrictions. One might thing, "Wait a minute! If Noah could eat *any* animal, why can't I?"

God dealt with people in different ways at different times. We call these periods "dispensations." This is why you are not only allowed to eat shellfish today, but you also don't have to bring a lamb to church for ritual sacrifice.

There's a personal application here as well: Sometimes God may ask us to submit to certain restrictions for a period of time. Maybe it has to do with your personal liberties as a Christian. Maybe it has to do with dreams you have about what you want to happen in your life. Other times, God does *not* impose those restrictions. For example: In Matthew 10 Jesus sent out His disciples to preach with no traveling bag, no money in their pockets, without even a second shirt. But, in Matthew 28, Jesus sends them out again with no such restrictions. It is our duty as children of God and servants in His household to seek His will for us *today*. Tomorrow, things may be different, but what is the Master's directive today?

Genesis 9:4 - ⁴However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it.

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/june-16-2018-animals-becoming-nocturnal-cod-comeback-stumbles-and-more-1.4705655/fear-of-humans-is-driving-animals-into-the-darkness-and-nocturnal-life-1.4705671>

Blood in meat is a significant Biblical issue. It appears here and under the Law, in the time of the kings, and then again in the book of Acts. A careful reader of Scripture will have to, at some point, ask whether it's ok for us to eat a piece of meat cooked rare!

First, that red liquid coming out of your steak isn't blood, it's myoglobin.² The animal has already been drained. What about that perfect slice of sushi? I was surprised to learn that raw fish has long been considered kosher by the Rabbis of Israel³ as long as the fish itself was on the approved list.

More importantly, the New Testament clearly explains that nothing that goes into your mouth can defile you. Jesus said so.⁴ Paul reiterated that *nothing* is unclean to eat in and of itself.⁵

But let's look at this another way. Given the strong prohibitions on the eating of blood throughout the Old Testament, imagine how startling and controversial it would have been to hear Jesus say: "The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." Why this image?

You and I are called into a *living* communion with God our Creator, not some ritualistic arrangement, drained of all the life. No, we are to consume ourselves with the Person of Jesus Christ, making His life our life. His mind our mind. His heart our heart. With His blood washing over all of us, head to toe, bearing away our sin and then going on, day by day, *feeding* on Him for life.

Genesis 9:5-6 - ⁵ And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person's life. ⁶ Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image.

God keeps track of *every single* human life. In fact, the Bible tells us that God keeps track of *every* living thing, even the life and death of the sparrows.⁶ But, to Him, human life is so important that it must be preserved, protected, and paid back life-for-life in the case of murder.

Capital punishment is a sensitive and controversial issue. Most Americans now oppose the death penalty.⁷ Among Christians there seems to be a growing hostility toward it. In December of 2020, *Relevant Magazine* published an article titled, "*All Christians Should Oppose The Death Penalty.*"

The *application* of the death penalty is a complicated issue worthy of discussion. But at the level of *principle*, capital punishment is God-given and God-sanctioned. We see it here, we see it under the Law, and we even see Paul the apostle supporting it, not only in Romans 13 but also when it came to his *own* criminal case!⁸

² <https://steakschool.com/learn/red-liquid-steak-plate-not-blood/>

³ <https://ohr.edu/ask/ask185.htm#Q2>

⁴ Matthew 15:11

⁵ Romans 14:14

⁶ Matthew 10:29

⁷ <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/religious-statements/opinion-polls-death-penalty-support-and-religion>

⁸ Acts 25:11

God *hates* murder and He's very serious about it. He doesn't condone vigilantism and it's not that He never allows mercy for murderers (He did in many cases), but, on the *principle* level, at the *societal* level, He *requires* that we value human life so much that if a person purposefully takes a life, everything stops. Their life must be taken as the required payment. It doesn't matter *who* the killer is - whether they're rich or poor, powerful or unimportant, stranger or brother. All were to be held to this standard because every singly human life is of infinite value to God.

The same is *not* true for animals. God said to Noah, "You're gonna start killing animals and eating them." No death penalty for a bbq. Sadly, in today's world, we've cheapened human life so much that our culture argues over whether animals and humans are of equal worth. Back in 2016, a little toddler fell into an exhibit at the Cincinnati Zoo. Harambe, a silverback gorilla, picked the boy up and started dragging him around. As the situation escalated, zoo officials made the decision to shoot Harambe and the child was saved. Then came the outcry. Petitions were started to have the child's parents charged. A Facebook page called *Justice For Harambe* quickly gathered 150,000 members. One of them wrote: "Shooting an endangered animal is worse than murder."⁹

Biblically speaking, human life is unlike any other life on the planet. It is so valuable that God Himself left heaven, put on flesh, and died for *us* so that we would have the *chance* to be saved. And when a society wantonly allows guilty, unrepentant killers to live, it is a wicked rebellion against God and an abhorrent insult to His justice. God is keeping track and requires payment.

Now, having heard God say these things, I suppose Noah might have said, "But, Lord, we're not going to kill anyone!" Maybe not, but God was explaining that humans are natural born killers. Therefore, we need some level of government to keep our violent hatred in check.

Genesis 9:7 - ⁷ But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it."

The context is that the world would soon be full of death, bloodshed, murder, savagery. But God's people did not need to cower or hide away or be frightened of what lay ahead. They were set apart by God to live a life full of His grace and power and blessing.

Sometimes people ask whether Christians should bring children into such a terrible world. The world has *always* been terrible. God keeps us here - for now - to be salt and light. Christian author and musician Andrew Peterson has a great book title: *Adorning The Dark*. We're the light of this dark world. We're the ones with real life. We're the ones with real hope. Does God want you, *specifically*, to have kids? That's between you and Him. Does God want His people *generally* to continue to be fruitful and raise families? And make this world salty? Absolutely!

Genesis 9:8-10 - ⁸ Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, ⁹ "Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living

⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/07/27/the-internet-wont-let-harambe-rest-in-peace/>

creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark.

Where I read “understand” in verse 9, your version may have “Behold.” God *wants* to be known and He was His Word to be understood. He’s going to use the word ‘covenant’ 7 times in these 10 verses. He calls it “My covenant.” It was *His* idea. It wasn’t developed as a response to some complaint from mankind. It was born out of *His* grace and compassion and love for us. Apparently right now the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees is preparing to go on strike and shut down Hollywood productions because of long hours and low pay. They’re hoping to force the powers that be at companies like Disney and Netflix and Amazon to comply with *their* wishes.¹⁰ There will have to be talks and negotiations and compromises leading to a new contract. That’s not what God’s covenants are like. It’s *His* idea. What was the covenant?

Genesis 9:11 - ¹¹I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God looked through history and said, “Things are going to get really bad. Even though sin will spread and violence will saturate the earth, even the *Nephilim* will return. Even still I will not again destroy the world with a flood.” This is, by the way, another nail in the coffin of the theory that the flood was local rather than global. If the flood was local, God is a liar. There have been *many* deadly floods throughout history. In 2004, The Boxing Day tsunami killed over 200,000 people across thousands of miles and a dozen countries in just a few hours.¹¹ The flood was global.

Genesis 9:12-17 - ¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: ¹³I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature. ¹⁶The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and every creature on earth.”

The symbol of the rainbow has, of course, been hijacked in our culture. But, what an incredible, tender thing God did in giving us this sign of His promise. Think of it: any in raincloud on any day in any place any person can look up and see a visual representation of God’s *mercy*. A proof that He exists and that He is full of grace. That *mercy* is available to *anyone* who will drop to their knees and ask Him for it. God wants so badly for this message to get out that He hard-coded it into creation. You can go into your front yard tomorrow, turn on your hose and make your own rainbow at will. God has *filled the earth* with the proclamation of His mercy. And here He reminds us that He is not

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/business/media/hollywood-union-strike.html>

¹¹ <https://www.history.com/news/deadliest-tsunami-2004-indian-ocean>

only a promise *maker*, He is a promise *keeper*. That's the important thing. And He has the power to *keep* His promises.

Notice, too, where He says: "Whenever I form clouds over the earth." Do we realize just how involved God is in our lives? A sparrow doesn't fall to earth without His consent. He forms clouds in the Hanford sky. He measures the shores and gives boundaries to the oceans. He knit you together in your mother's womb. He numbers your hairs. He has written your days in His book. He bottles your tears. He whispers to your heart, "Follow Me. Receive My mercy. Discover new life in Christ so that you can be full of fruit and so you can thrive in this world." He values you so much! Your life is precious beyond compare to Him.

This God wants to walk with you through life. He's invited you to follow Him. He wants you to know His word and know His heart and He wants to bless you with every spiritual blessing, lavished on those who put their hope in Him, sent into the world to be salt and light until we're brought to our forever home in Heaven.