

November 13, 2016 - Gen. 8:15 – 9:17 - Leaving the Ark, Sign of the Covenant

Torah Reading - Gen. 8:15 – 9:17 - Leaving the Ark, Sign of the Covenant

Psalm 6 - [Relates to both this week's and last week's readings]

Haftarah - Jeremiah 31:19-26 + 34-35

Genesis 8:20 - And Noah built an altar to the LORD

Noah first thanks God before seeing to his own needs or those of his family.

This is the first mention of an altar. In the Garden, God walked with Adam and Eve. After the Fall, he still communed with Enoch and others. After the Flood, the Lord is depicted as “on high,” dwelling in Heaven. An altar and its burning sacrifice directs its “sweet smelling savor” upward to Heaven.

A whole burnt offering - olâh; literally, things that ascend, from 'alah, to go up - the whole victim, except the skin, being burned on the altar. - signifies symbolically that in Christ we are a living sacrifice, totally surrendered up to him.

Romans 12:1 - “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Clean beasts were a type of Christ; the bullock or heifer might denote his strength, the sheep or lamb his patience and harmlessness, the dove his meekness.

Acceptance

Genesis 8:21 - “And the LORD smelled a sweet smell”

(In Leviticus, these are called sweet savor offerings, or acceptance offerings - and are only an option after sin and trespass offerings had been given)

”And Yahweh smelled the smell of satisfaction,” i.e., He graciously accepted the FAITH of the offerer, which rose to Him through the ACT of sacrifice, evidenced in the smoke and odor that rose from the altar. God was satisfied because the sacrifice displayed in a foreshadowing symbol the death of Christ on the cross. Ideally, when a man presented a sacrifice to God, it was understood as being in place of his own life, and thus his inmost being, his spirit and his heart ascended to God in the smoke, and the sacrifice brought the feelings of his heart before God. If it was truly a response of faith, the sacrifice (and the offerer) was accepted, because God saw in it his Son.

If there is no FAITH involved, the ACT of sacrifice is meaningless, and:
Leviticus 26:31 - “I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors.”

Proverbs 21:27 - “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he

bringeth it with a wicked mind?"

Isaiah 66:3 - "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations."

God's Promise

Genesis 8:21 - "and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake"

"said in his heart" - This is the response to God's initial grief "in his heart" at man's violence and rebellion:

Genesis 6:6 - "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

Hebrew: "I will not 'add' to curse the ground any more.(i.e. in addition to the curse that followed the Fall in Genesis 3:17)"

...for [i.e. even though] the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth . . ." (See Genesis 6:5)

[Man's only hope: Psalm 25:7 - Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.]

Genesis 9:5-6 - Murder punished by death

Genesis 9:5-6 - "at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. . . . for in the image of God made he man."

"The command does not sanction revenge, but lays the foundation for the judicial rights of the divinely appointed "powers that be" (Romans 13:1). This is evident from the reason appended: "for in the image of God made He man." If murder was to be punished with death because it destroyed the image of God in man, it is evident that the infliction of the punishment was not to be left to the caprice of individuals, but belonged to those alone who represent the authority and majesty of God, i.e., the divinely appointed rulers. This command then laid the foundation for all civil government." - Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary

(But this idea of government authority is always in tension with the prophetic word against corrupt rulers and tyrants, as well as the demonic authorities persecuting the church, as represented in Revelation and elsewhere).

Genesis 9:8-17 - The Rainbow: Sign of the Covenant

Genesis 9:13 - "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

It's strange that the rainbow's meaning as a sign of God's mercy and promise never again to destroy the earth by a flood does not show up in the Babylonian or other flood stories. Either it's been hidden or was forgotten.

There are a few exceptions. In the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, the "glistening colors of the rainbow rise" in the fountain of life next to Elam's Tree of Immortality, which sort of hints at the description of God's glory in Revelation 4:3. In a Hindu myth, the bow that is used by Indra in shooting bolts of lightning at his enemies, becomes the rainbow when the storm is over, a promise of peace to mankind. Some myths see the rainbow, like the Milky Way, as a link between heaven and earth. But in most cultures, the rainbow is a malevolent figure, and often parents try to keep their children from looking at it.

The rainbow symbol is depicted as a permanent part of God's glory...

Revelation 4:3 - "...and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

...and is present even with his messengers:

Revelation 10:1 - "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire"

St. Basil the Great (330-379 A.D.) thought the rainbow perfectly reflected the unity of the persons of the Trinity. "We clearly distinguish the difference of the colors, and yet it is impossible for us to apprehend by our senses any interval between them. ... Of the proper nature, no difference can be conceived as existing between one and the other, the peculiar characteristics shining, in community of essence, upon each."

—<http://theradtrad.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-rainbow-as-image-of-trinity.html>