

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

Bible 101, Part II

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Hi everybody. It's Katie Patrizio again, and I'm excited to dive once more into the story of scripture and attempting to give us a good, solid background for the coming of Jesus and why that's so important. So last time we looked at Adam, and creation, and The Fall. Today we're going to look ahead to Noah, and we're even to get into Abraham a little bit. But before I do that, let's go ahead and start with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord God, we thank You once more for bringing us together, to contemplate Your word and to learn more about You in order to grow closer to You. We thank You for the ways that, from the beginning of time, You extended a covenant to us and attempted to remake this covenant over and over. We pray that we would be open to Your work in our lives, that we may grow closer to You, and draw others to Yourself as well. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So, like I said, last time we talked a lot about the notion of covenant, which, I gave you a brief definition, is an extension of kinship by oath. We also talked about the creation account, and how God created the world in 7 days. And because 7 and the word "covenant" in Hebrew is so connected, we can even say that God covenanted the world into existence. He created man in a familial bond, which is exciting. But shortly after creation in Genesis 1 and 2, we get to Genesis 3, which is the account of The Fall, where Adam and Eve rejected that familial bond they had with God. And so we left off, Adam and Eve were being evicted from the garden, and we said that God now is going to attempt to remake the covenant. In fact, kind of all of the rest of salvation history leading up to and including Jesus is going to be God's attempt to remake the covenant.

So, what does God do first? Well, God essentially decides to give the world a second chance. Maybe at times you've considered creation and The Fall, and you've asked yourself "Why didn't God give man a second chance?" Or "What would we have done if we had a second chance?" Well, I'll argue that that's essentially what God did in the person of Noah, the story of Noah. So if you're mildly familiar with the story of Noah, probably what you're most familiar with is the story of the flood. But leading up to that, we read that Noah was a righteous man, that Noah's family was righteous, and that pretty much everybody else in the world was completely corrupt.

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

And so what God does is He gives Noah the command to build the ark, to bring some of the animals as well as his family into the ark, and He says He's going to destroy the world and He's going to start all over again. What's fascinating is that if you read the account of the flood right next to the account of creation, you'll see very parallel imagery. So, for example, when God creates the world, He brings the dry land out of the water. And we'll see that God is recreating the world in a way, because He's going to plunge the dry land into the water and then pull it out of the water once more. And so God is quite literally recreating the world. He's giving the world a second chance.

But if you're familiar with what happens after the flood narrative, the flood story, you know that what Noah does is very similar to what Adam does. So, the story seems to tell us that as soon as Noah gets off the ark, what he does is he plants a vineyard. And we almost get the vibe, it's a little bit comical, we almost get the vibe that Noah just sits around and watches the grapes grow. And so he plants this vineyard, grows grapes, and as soon as he can he makes wine. And then it tells us he drinks so much wine that he gets drunk.

Now, just as the flood narrative is really similar to the creation narrative, this story of Noah getting drunk on his own wine is very similar to the story of The Fall of Adam and Eve. So allow me to draw the parallel here: Adam and Eve were given all of these fruits, all of these trees they could eat of. They just had one that they couldn't. And so that's the disobedience - they overconsumed of the fruit of their garden. A vineyard is a type of garden, and what Noah does in getting drunk is the same that Adam and Eve did. He overconsumes of the fruit of his garden.

And so God's attempt, in a way, to start all over again, to recreate the world, to bring together a righteous family to allow the world to be repopulated by a righteous family doesn't work out quite as you would hope. We know that God is omniscient, that He's all-knowing, so likely He didn't do this for His own satisfaction. He perhaps did it for our satisfaction should we ask the question "What if we had a second chance?" Well, I suppose you could say now we know that we probably would have done the same thing that Adam and Eve had done, right. That's what Noah did. So at this point, you might say that God kind of starts to change His strategy a little bit. Not really because, like I said, God is omniscient, He is all-knowing. He doesn't really change His mind. But nevertheless, He does seem to change His strategy here.

So after Noah, the next major figure in scripture, the next patriarch with whom God tries to remake the covenant is Abraham. And in Abraham, instead of recreating the world again, instead of sending the flood again - which He couldn't because He promised He wouldn't, right - but destroying the world somehow and

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

raising up Abraham and his family. God decides that what He's going to do, He's still going to raise up Abraham, but in a different way. He's going to raise up Abraham, and through Abraham He's going to raise up a family, and through this family He's going to raise up a nation, and then through this nation God is going to draw the rest of the world back to Himself.

So that's God's plan from here on out for reconciling the world to Himself: He's going to take one man, Abraham. From that one man He's going to raise up a family. This family is going to come to be known as Israel, okay. Then Israel as a tribe is going to grow into a sovereign nation with the Davidic king, okay. And then from this nation, the rest of the world is going to be drawn to God through Israel. The Gentiles, the nations are going to be drawn to God through Israel.

God explicitly extended a covenant to Noah. So I said in Genesis 1 and 2 we didn't get the explicit word "covenant." But God uses the word covenant explicitly in relation to Noah, and He also uses it explicitly in relation to Abraham. In fact, God is going to make 3 covenants with Abraham. He's going to talk about those promises, those covenants in Genesis 12, and then He's going to solemnize 3 promises, because He's going to make 3 promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, and then God is going to solemnize those promises into covenants. He's going to do this at Genesis 15, 17, and 22, okay.

Let's look back at Genesis 12 though. I said God makes 3 promises to Abraham. Those promises are that Abraham is going to be a great nation, his descendants specifically are going to be a great nation; that they're going to be a great name, which in ancient Near-Eastern culture means that they'll be royalty; and thirdly, that all the world will be blessed through Abraham's descendants. Universal blessing. Great nation, great name, universal blessing. You can read about those promises in Genesis 12. They're kind of hand-in-hand with the most famous promise we have given to Abraham, which is simply the promise that he'll have a son. Because if you remember Abraham and Sarah, they were childless, okay.

So God is going to raise up a son for Abraham, and raise up in fact many dependents to Abraham. Those descendants are going to be a great nation, a great name, and universal blessing is going to come to the world through them. I said those 3 promises are contained initially in Genesis 12, but God solemnizes them into specific covenants in Genesis 15, 17, and 22. Genesis 22 is probably the most famous story of the solemnization of the covenant. This is the story of what the Jewish people call the Binding of Isaac, okay. This is the story that causes a lot of scandal for many people reading scripture, because we read the story and we think child abuse, right.

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

So Isaac has finally been born from Sarah, and God tells Abraham to go sacrifice his only-begotten son, Isaac. To go to the land of Mount Moriah and to sacrifice Isaac. And it tells us that Abraham is obedient. And so he takes some of his servants, and he takes Isaac, and he travels this 3-day journey to the region of Mount Moriah. And when they arrive he leaves his servants and goes to walk up the mountain himself to offer sacrifice. At this point, Isaac asks something really interesting of his father. He says "Where's the sacrifice?" And Abraham says something very prophetic. He says "God Himself will provide the sacrifice." And then they continue walking up the hill. If you're familiar with the story, you know that Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac, and then the angel of the Lord stops him. And it tells us that God is satisfied and knows that Abraham is willing to sacrifice his only-begotten son, and that that is sufficient for Him.

The story becomes scandalous when we take the view that is often taken, which is that Isaac was a young boy. In fact, most of the rabbis and Jewish people, if not all of them, believe something very different. They believe that Isaac was actually a full-grown man, that he was strapping, that he was strong. You can see this in the fact that it's Isaac who carries the wood up Mount Moriah, not Abraham, who is very old at this point. And that really changes the scene for us, because if Isaac is no longer a little boy who's arguably the victim of child abuse, if he is in fact a young, strong, strapping man, what we have then is no longer child abuse at all, but what we have is a son willingly cooperating in the sacrifice of his father.

And so we're not that far into the story yet but, again, you can already see, just like in Genesis 3:15 with the Protevangelium, the first gospel, you can see the way in which God is showing for us symbolically the manner in which He's going to redeem us, He's going to reconcile the world to Himself. I said if Isaac is a big, strong, strapping man, and we no longer have this view of him as a child, what we have then is - I want to reiterate this to you - we have a son willingly cooperating in the sacrifice of his father.

I'll give you another little fun fact here I suppose, which is actually really powerful. The sacrifice that God Himself provides - so Abraham answered prophetically Isaac's question "Where's the lamb for sacrifice?" - The lamb, the ram that God provides, the scripture tells us, is caught in the thicket and thorns. His horns are caught in the thicket. And we don't often really think through this, but this ram caught in the thicket that Abraham and Isaac knew they were about to use for sacrifice, they probably would not have taken the time to remove all of the thorns and the thicket from the head of the ram. In other words, and this is a common view in Jewish circles, the ram, the lamb that was sacrificed in place of Isaac on Mount Moriah, it had a crown of thorns on its head, which is really powerful and really cool and really amazing to think about.

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

I want to go back to how I said Abraham uttered something really prophetic in response to Isaac's question. Abraham says "God Himself will provide the lamb." Oftentimes in prophecy, we have an initial fulfillment, and then we have a final fulfillment. And so that prophetic answer is initially fulfilled when the ram is caught in the thicket, and God provides the ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac. But the final fulfillment is going to come in Jesus - and I'm getting ahead of myself here a little bit but I just can't resist - it's going to come in Jesus, when God Himself will provide the lamb, a lamb that is wearing a crown of thorns, and that has even carried the wood of the sacrifice up on the mountain. A son who is willingly cooperating in the sacrifice of his father. Really cool stuff in scripture.

So we've made it through Adam. The creation, Adam, The Fall, Noah, Abraham. As we move forward, what we're going to see is that there are 6 covenants in scripture that we're going to focus on. We've already covered 3 of them. In this third covenant with Abraham, God makes 3 covenants, 3 promises: Great nation, great name, universal blessing. In the final 3 covenants that we're going to cover here shortly, we're going to see that each of those 3 covenants fulfills one of the three promise made to Abraham. And I'll just keep you waiting for the excitement as we continue moving forward. I don't want to share too much of a teaser, because I want you to start feeling maybe some of the excitement and some of the longing that maybe the Jewish people were experiencing, and what a great time to have that than here in Advent. Thanks so much for listening.