

Gen. 8:20-9:17; Rev. 4:1-6; The Covenant of Preservation I. The Context of this Covenant II. The Fulfillment of this Covenant

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever forgotten an important event or date? We, as people, can be very forgetful sometimes. That is why we make reminders- we set events on our phones, write reminders on our calendars or post-it notes. All to help us remember! Today in our reading from Gen. we find a reminder that God gives to Himself for our sake. When God sees the rainbow- He will remember! And when we see the rainbow- we will also remember and believe! Today we come to what is called the covenant with Noah or the covenant of creation's preservation. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ secures the continued existence of creation by securing peace. In the Covenant with Noah, the promise of peace is extended to the world.

I. The Context of this Covenant

In our first point, we find the context of this covenant. What was happening in history at this time that paved the way for the Covenant that God would make with Noah? Well, the context is once again the rise of sin and rebellion. As we saw last week with the fall into sin in Gen. 3- this week we find the spread of sin. The rise of the noise of rebellion is reaching a crescendo- a fever pitch! Gen. 6:11- the earth was corrupt in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence. Fallen people are living nearly a millennium- their plans are totally evil all the time. There is no end to their schemes! The seed of the serpent- the line of Cain- is filling the earth with bloodshed. The earth has grown so corrupt- to wicked and rebellious- that God is going to come down in His wrath. God is going to send a flood- 6:13- to make an end of all flesh- God is going to destroy them along with the earth. God is going to start over- His creatures are so wicked and rebellious that the ground groans- crying out for justice- at all the blood that has been shed. Few remember the God of Adam- few call on His name and few believe His promises! The battle is lopsided- the Kingdom of Darkness is spreading and almost all the earth has fallen under the sway of the serpent! The seed of the woman- the line of Seth- is being reduced to a

small remnant. The line of the covenant- the chosen people- the sons of God- have been reduced to a mere 8! Noah and his family are all that remain- Noah who is identified as a righteous man in 6:9- one who walks with the LORD- is tormented in his soul at what he sees and hears. God in His grace comes to Noah- promising to spare his life and his family's. God provides a way of escape- a way to flee from the coming wrath. Noah- build a mighty boat- a giant ark! Take into this ark 2 of every kind of animal and 7 pair of the clean animals. Noah is promised in 6:18- although everything is going to die- I will remember you! I will establish my covenant with you. You will be kept alive- some of my creatures will be kept alive with you. So the context of this covenant is that of rebellion of the main- but also the promise of a rescue for remnant. And the flood waters came- just as God said they would. They covered the earth for a year in total- so all creatures on the face of the earth- all the birds that filled the sky- all men whom were made in God's image- everything outside of the ark died! The earth was deluged! Darkness was on the face of the earth- the material world was plunged into death once again. The world of order, light and life returned to confusion, darkness and death. The earthly structure mixed once again. But as 8:1 says- God remembered Noah! Here there is such grace! God sees- God remembers- and God acts! The wind or breath of God blows- the dry land emerges from the waters. The dove flies and find a branch! New life begins! The earth was purified and cleansed. The old order was remade with water! God is going to reset the scale- He starts over. He keeps His promise made to Adam and Eve- the battle will continue and the wicked will not prevail on this earth! A new humanity comes out of the ark- Noah becomes a second Adam of sorts. A new creation- with creatures coming out of the ark according to their kind. The sun shines- and mankind is saved- our species spared from destruction- and Noah comes out of His tomb- rising out of the watery grave- spared from the destruction by water. And the first thing he does is build an altar (8:20). Those who receive blessings must always respond with thanksgiving. Just as those who receive the covenant must respond to it. Isn't that what profession of faith is! Responding to the covenant by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice of praise! Professing

before the world that I too have received the name and mercy of God- His sign is upon me! As we will see in a moment- the rainbow is the sign of the covenant of creation's preservation. But it is baptism that is given as the sign of the New Covenant. So those who receive this sign also receive the promise of peace. So we embrace the promises made to us at baptism- and rejoice in the promise of peace we have through Jesus Christ our Lord! The water of the flood points to the water of baptism as our form for baptism says- just as You punished the unrepentant world in holy judgement by sending a flood- but saved and protected Noah and his family. So you reveal the meaning of baptism in that we are condemned in ourselves and spared only as we are joined to Christ in faith. That is what Jo has professed. Outside of Christ we all deserve to be destroyed as the world was all those years ago. But in Christ- by faith- we are saved as Noah was saved in the ark. It is this savior whom we embrace and whose name we confess!

II. The Fulfillment of this Covenant

So in 8:20 Noah gets right to work. He makes a temple in the wilderness- the land of death becomes a place of worship and life! Remember righteous Able- who offered a pleasing sacrifice to the LORD- Able the righteous prophet! Now we have Noah- the man of righteousness builds an altar- offering some of the clean animals that God had provided. And how does God view this sacrifice? Well- as 8:21 says- the LORD is pleased! He delights in- taking pleasure in this sweet-smelling aroma! God's anger abates- His delight in righteousness shines forth. His justice is propitiated- and He speaks words of blessing and peace. Notice again- the shedding of blood. Animals died- and God is satisfied! Even though sin is still present- Noah and his children will not live holy, perfect and sin-free lives. And yet- there is the promise of peace because satisfaction will be made. So God covenants with Noah in 9:9- an agreement and relationship is established between the LORD and Noah, Noah's offspring, and every living creature that came out of the ark! Noah is the head of a new covenant- the covenant of creation's preservation. A new garden is being planted- a place of worship and fellowship are built. God binds Himself to man- to

the creatures. Note that 9:9 says- God establishes his covenant. Again in v. 11- I establish my covenant. The giving of a covenant is a divine act- a gracious promise that He sovereignly gives! And what does He promise? Basically, peace and preservation! First all, He promises no more world-wide floods. He will never again destroy the entire world by way of water. Secondly, He promises that season will follow season as long as this world endures. This does not mean that the world will endure forever. Nor does it mean that the earth will not be destroyed. As expanded upon in II Peter 3:6- the world that once existed was deluged with water and perished- and the earth that now exists is stored up for fire- kept until the day of judgement and the destruction of the ungodly. So a future destruction is coming- not by water but by fire. But until that final day- the day of Christ's return- we are promised that this world will continue- that season will follow season- that summer and winter, springtime and harvest will continue their orderly return. As an aside- we can be comforted in knowing that our world is not at the mercy of global warming- nor are we to fear mother earth and her fickle temper. Rather, this is and remains our Father's world- and He will preserve it and continue it as He has promised. And in order to prove this fact, He has given us a sign. In 9:12 God says, and this is a sign of the covenant that I make- a sign between me and you- and the creatures with you for all generations. I have set my bow in the clouds. God gives to Noah the sign of the rainbow. The bow in the hands of man is a sign of war- and the LORD is said to ride in the chariots of the thunderclouds. As Psalm 18:13 says, the LORD may send lightning like arrows from on high- but now, the LORD sets his bow down- hangs his bow on the clouds. This is a promise of peace- and the sign of peace is one that He will see- as a reminder. The rainbow is a sign of a truce- a time of peace had come- and God would remember. The LORD extends peace for a time knowing that one day lasting peace would be attained. There is given a period of time for the earth to endure- judgement of the wicked would be dealt with at a later date. Not that God forgets, but this sacramental sign is a memorial given as a testament of His love. The sign of the covenant will be ever before the Lord. The bow of judgement- the waters of the flood- will no more rain down upon all

mankind. There will be peace on earth- because God has said so! Every time we see the rainbow we are reminded- God has given us His word- and He keeps His promise! But the time was coming when another sign would be seen in the sky. One day, instead of a rainbow there will be a star in the sky. A star that was followed from the East- by wise men who traveled from afar. What event would deserve this celestial sign? A savior has been born to you- one who will bring peace on earth and goodwill towards men! In fact, this Prince of Peace will one day sit on a throne as we read in Rev. 4. And what will be around that throne? Nothing less than a rainbow! One day, a perfect rainbow will be seen in the sky! A perfect circle- not a half circle- a perfect circle around the throne of God! The giving of the rainbow in the OT was a promise of peace- a peace that Jesus has secured as He crushed Satan's head! There is peace on earth- and good will towards man- creation itself will one day enjoy the restoration of all things- because the Prince of Peace will come!

To conclude, when Noah came off the ark, he made an altar and offered a sacrifice. Blood was shed- because without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness- no peace! But peace has been promised- and as a sign of peace we have the rainbow in the sky. One day the rainbow will be seen around the throne of the Lamb whose blood was shed so that we might have peace and life! The covenant of creation's preservation secures the preservation of this current world order. By this covenant the church is provided a context in which to hear the gospel and share the good news. There is good news because the Lamb of God has come. It is by His blood shed once for all that we have forgiveness and lasting peace! His sacrifice was that pleasing, sweet smelling aroma that secured our pardon- in his name we are delivered from the flood and brought safely to the new creation that is to come!