

January 9-Genesis 9

Genesis 9 introduces the importance and sacred nature of a being's blood. This theme permeates the Scriptures from this chapter forward and sheds light on the value of life. It is helpful to note that Genesis 9 is the culmination of the "reset" that began all the way back in Genesis 6. In Genesis 6 we read that God looks upon mankind on the earth in judgment making the decision to "blot out" man from the earth. Of course, God preserves Noah and his family along with a male and female of each species of animal for the purpose of effectively starting over. This fresh start begins once again with God's instructions to man and these instructions are somewhat similar to God's initial instruction given to Adam in Genesis 1.

Some of the similarities include: God's command to "be fruitful and multiply" as well as the acknowledgement that man is to rule over creation (Genesis 1:28, 9:2). However, as we examine the two chapters, we read one very obvious difference. In Genesis 1, God instructs man that he can eat of any green plant, but in Genesis 9 God adds to that statement by including "Every moving thing" as available for consumption (9:3). This declaration by God is in some ways a concession that things are not what they should be on earth. We can see this by thinking about the difference in the situations between Genesis 1 and Genesis 9.

In Genesis 1 there was no such thing as death. Death had not yet reared its ugly head because the very thing to bring death, namely sin, was not yet a reality. The Scripture is very clear that death is a punishment for sin (Romans 6:23), therefore sin is a consequence of disobedience not a reflection of God's original plan and order. Sin does not enter into the biblical narrative until chapter 3 but we have already seen how it has dramatically impacted the world that was once perfect. We have read of man's depravity already in the account of the first murder in Genesis 4, we have seen man's desire for rest from his toil which is the product of sin in Genesis 5, and we have read the account of God's judgment on the earth because of pervasive sin in Genesis 6-8. Now, in Genesis 9, God acknowledges that death will be a part of His creation and in so doing He allows mankind to partake in the consumption of once living beings. However, as we read God's instructions regarding the consumption of animals there is one interesting twist. Verses 4-5 state "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning from every beast I will require it and from man." While God concedes that man can partake in animals, He maintains that the blood of an animal is sacred. Furthermore in verse 5 He adds onto this thought by instructing Noah that He will personally hold accountable, or "require a reckoning", every man or animal that takes the life of a person. God does not deny the reality of death, but He still values life.

We stated earlier that the Scriptures teach us that the result of sin is death. Death is a certainty for all of us on this planet. This truth serves to remind us of the severity of sin. Sin is not something to be trifled with, it is not something that is mildly inconvenient, and its effects are not manageable by human standards. Sin requires death. The Bible goes on to tell us that the only payment for our sin is blood. In fact, Hebrews 9:22 shares with us that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

So, what we have in Genesis 9 is a picture of a God who values life but acknowledges the reality of death. God had to demand that sin be atoned for through death, but He also loved and valued human life. This interesting dichotomy of righteous demands and unending love prompted God to send His Son to pay with His own blood for the consequence of our sin. Someone had to pay but in God's great love for humanity, He looked upon the sacrificial death and shedding of blood by Jesus Christ and accepted that payment on the behalf of all who would repent of their own attempts to pay for their sin and believe in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. God says it this way in Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." What a righteous and yet loving God we serve!