

168 Adam and Noah – Check your doctrine

My (real) enquiring friend, ‘John’, came back to me and, while appreciating the idea of trying to interpret the Bible through Jesus’ eyes, is still concerned that I’m ignoring the characters who come before Abraham.

As I’ve said before, I’m no historian, but to me, from chapter 12 onwards (the call of Abram), Genesis does have a more historical feel. I think therefore that we need to treat chapters 1–11 with greater care when trying to generate our doctrine from it.

I’ve already had a little look (after John’s earlier prompting) at Noah,^[150] but I stupidly missed out the rainbow and God’s covenant. The writer saw it in terms of God destroying evil people, but God inspired that writer to see the rainbow as God saying “*Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.*” (9:13) So God is saying that he’s not like the other gods. No, he promises, “*never again will I destroy all living creatures.*” (8:21)

And the Noahic covenant is not conditional, i.e. it’s not saying, “If you obey me...” Rather, it’s an expression of God’s unconditional love and care for us. Specifically, “*As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.*” (8:22) (Sadly, humankind’s treatment of the planet is working towards undoing God’s attempts to preserve that “seedtime and harvest”.)

As regards Adam, again we need to be very careful if we try to use it to create doctrine. I have already referred to a book by “a highly respected Christian leader”.^[154] He died some years ago, but people still gain real strength from his sermons. According to him, Genesis shows that women were created to be followers, not leaders, and that Adam’s sin was to allow himself to be led by his wife, therefore women should not be allowed to be church leaders.

Sorry to be negative, but the other doctrine drawn from early Genesis, which I have totally rejected, is that of ‘original sin’.^[163] No, sorry, God does **not** make rubbish! God looked at all he had made and it was good – it was “*very good*” (day 6)! Yes, OK, we do our best to spoil things, but God works for our restoration.

So, does your doctrine lead to fear and control (by clergy)? In which case, go back and check your doctrine against what Jesus said and did. Or does your doctrine lead to love and joy and self-control? In which case, you’re probably on roughly the right lines.

*In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him [God!]. **There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.*** (1 John 4:17,18)

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