

## Why has there been another harvest this year? — Genesis 8:21–22

Basil Howlett - Carey Baptist Church - 30 September 2007

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It's not just due to the hard work of farmers and their employees. It's certainly not by courtesy of some mythical person called 'Mother Earth'. The basic reason is that God gave a promise, many centuries ago, immediately after a massive flood at the time of Noah. God promised that while the earth continued, never again would there be a universal judgment such as the flood which had just disrupted the whole world. While the earth remained it would follow its regular pattern – seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. In this promise we see 3 three things about God and one about ourselves. We see God's goodness, God's seriousness, God's mercy and we see all that against the background of human wickedness.

### A. God's goodness

It is God in his goodness who sends the seasons of the year, seedtime and harvest, day and night. Apart from his goodness there would be no rainfall or sunshine in any country, no day or night in any continent, no world to live in.

- We don't deserve such goodness. This passage tells us that we have sinful hearts affected by selfishness, pride and rebellion against God.
- We don't appreciate God's goodness.
- We don't respond to God's goodness. God's good gifts should direct our attention to his existence and kindness (Acts 14:17).

### B. God's seriousness

Included in his promise is a serious warning that this world will not go on forever. God is still in control of the world and one day will bring it to an end (2 Peter 3:10). Everyone will then be summoned to stand before God to be judged. Those who have trusted in Christ will be taken to God's perfect kingdom. Those who have just lived for self and have never bothered about their souls or their sin will hear the judgment of God pronounced upon them and will be sent to a place of eternal despair and hopelessness. Because the hearts of men and women are bad, they refuse to listen to God's warning. They spurn his immense goodness and reject his intense seriousness

### C. God's mercy

God promised that as long as the earth endures he will never again send a universal judgement (verse 21). Why did he say that? He sent a universal flood in Noah's day. Why then in all the years since has there not been another. It's not because we are better than they were but rather because of God's mercy. He is holding back the judgment that we deserve. And he is doing to give us time to repent and ask for his forgiveness. God who is immensely good and gives us a harvest every year has given us something even more wonderful. He has given us a Saviour. Jesus Christ came into this world and died to bear the punishment due to sinners. God has promised that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be forgiven for all their sin and will pass safely through the final judgement and to have a home in heaven. In his mercy God is holding back the day of judgement to give men and women time to see their need and to turn to Christ in faith.

When Noah made a sacrifice in verse 20, he was looking ahead to the day when God would allow his own Son to die as a sacrifice to bear the punishment of sin. It was a kind of picture of what God would do. It was when God smelled the pleasing aroma of Noah's sacrifice that he made this promise that he would never again send a universal judgement while the earth remained. That he would hold back his judgement until the final day to give men and women time to repent. It's as though God says *'Noah offering his sacrifice has reminded me that one day my Son will be sacrificed on the cross of Calvary – and because of that I will have mercy on men and women, I will hold back my judgment and give them time to repent and believe.'*

Have you done that?