

Lesson 4: Increase and Rest

How do we get plants in our garden to grow? We till the soil, plant the seeds, water, pull weeds, etc. Does it sound like work or rest? Sounds like work, doesn't it? It IS work! But it wasn't always that way.

We've been learning about seed and increase of seed. There is natural seed, that when planted, grows and makes increase. And there is a spiritual seed, which is Jesus, buried in our hearts, making His increase. I want to read you a few verses in Genesis, when God first created the world.

Genesis 2:7-9 And **the LORD God formed** man *of* the dust of the ground, **and breathed** into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And **the LORD God planted** a garden eastward in Eden; and there **he put** the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground **made the LORD God to grow** every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Do you remember that a verb is an action word? Who is doing all the action, all the work...“formed,” “breathed,” “planted,” “put,” “made to grow”? It is God. God planted the garden, made Adam, put him in the garden. God did it all. And then he gave the garden to Adam, to eat anything that grew there (except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). What happened? Why do we have to work hard to grow food now?

Genesis 3:17-19 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Because of sin, the ground is cursed. Now we have to contend with thorns and thistles (weeds), and work hard, sweating to make seed turn into more seed. This was not God's original design. This was not His desire. But this is the way it is in the natural world; work and effort to make increase. Sometimes we might think that this is the way we have increase, or greater knowing of God- by work and effort; but we're going to see God's plan of rest.

The first man born after Adam died was named Noah.

Genesis 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This *same* shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. {*Noah: Gr. Noe: that is Rest, or, Comfort*}
Noah was named Rest, rest from their work.

So let's talk about the story of Noah. Man had become very wicked and God was sorry He had created man on the earth. He told Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth (Gen 36:13).” And He told Noah to build an ark and gather animals and

his own family into it. God would make a Covenant with him, but would destroy all else. Everything God had created in the Garden of Eden, in the whole earth, was destroyed. All animals, plants, people. It was like God was starting over, with only Noah and his family and the animals on the ark. And that IS what God was doing. The story of Noah's flood is also the story of Jesus Christ. God has made covenant, the New Covenant, with one man- Jesus- and only those gathered into Him (like those gathered with Noah in the ark). All that finds its life in the earth and on the earth is destroyed, is buried, is gone from God's sight. He provided one salvation, one boat as a way out of the destruction (out of sin and self), and that is in Jesus. The cross makes this division- it divides between those who find their Life is Jesus, and those who refuse to be gathered in Him. The same waters that lifted the boat up, out of the earth into a safe place (salvation) also destroyed and buried everything in the earth (sin and self). The same work of the cross that provides salvation for those gathered in Him, also brings destruction to all that is not gathered in.

So, where is the rest that Noah was a promise of? After days and nights of rain, and then days and nights of waiting for the rain to dry up, the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat. The meaning of that word Ararat is "where the curse is reversed." Noah, who God made a New Covenant with, and those with him, come out of the ark into a New Creation on Mt. Ararat, where God's curse on the land- work and toil and sweat to make it produce- has been reversed. But this reverse of the curse is not of the earth.* It is still hard work to make plants grow. The curse is reversed in the New Creation-the story of Noah is a picture of this. In Christ, there is rest for our soul. Jesus Christ is our true Noah. In Christ, increase of the Seed is without human toil. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30)."

The ark rested on Mt. Ararat, but still the lands below were covered in water. After forty days, Noah "sent forth from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot and she returned into the ark to him...So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself (Genesis 8:8-9)." There is a sweet picture here. Remember that Noah is a type of Christ. One goes out from Him, unable to find rest, so He brings her back unto Himself until such a time when she is able to find the promised rest; until the work of burial has been completed. If we are not finding that rest, we need to return to Him, remain hidden and buried in Him until He has brought His work to completion in our hearts and we can go forth in rest. Sometimes we get ahead of Him. Our minds know the truth, and so we set out, but do not find rest. Fly back to Him. Wait on Him. The waters recede and we will see a greater and greater view of the New Creation. And we will find rest for our soul.

Do you remember how, in the beginning, God "formed," "breathed," "planted," "put," "made to grow"? It was all His doing. In Christ, the New Creation, it is that way again. The curse of work and struggle is over. We do not work and labor to be like God. We do not work and labor, by our own efforts, to make increase in our hearts of His Seed. The only "work" that is ours is to labor to enter into rest (Heb 4). That is all.

Hebrews 4:9-11

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

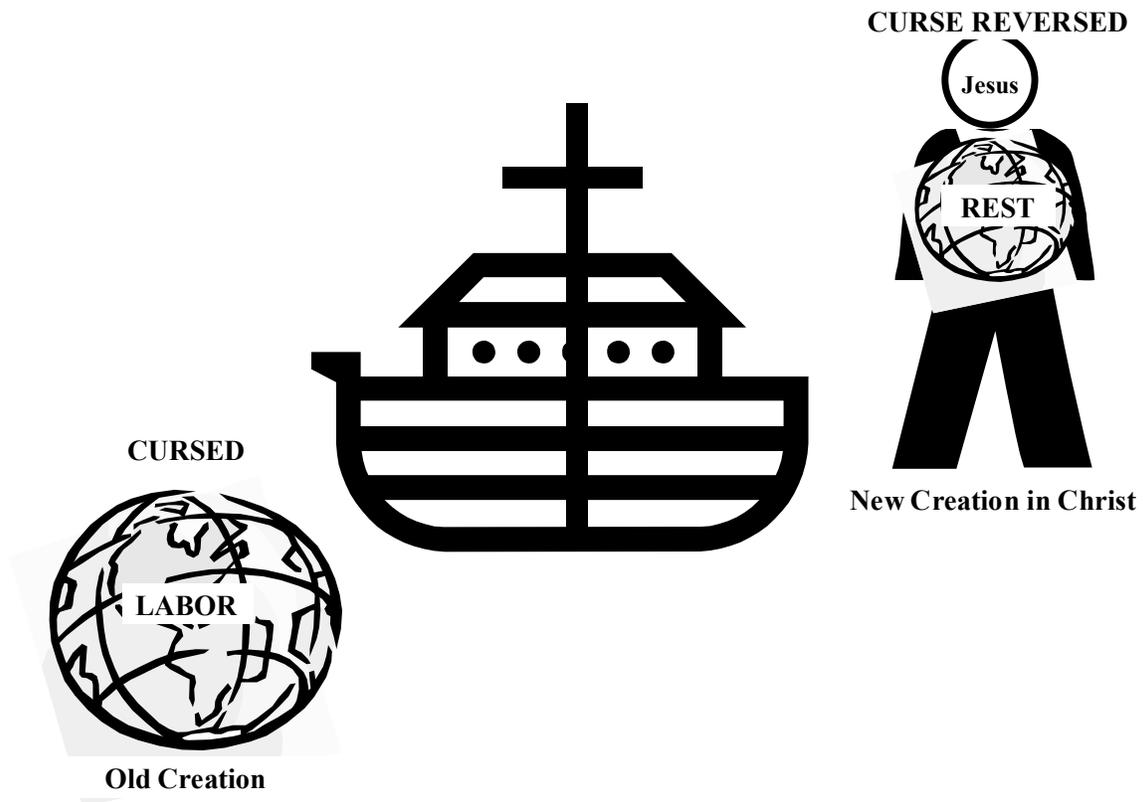
10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

* The first is of the earth, earthy- the Old Creation, the Old Covenant. The second- the New Creation, the New Covenant- is of heaven, spiritual, Christ Himself (1 Cor. 15:45-50).

Follow-up Activity:

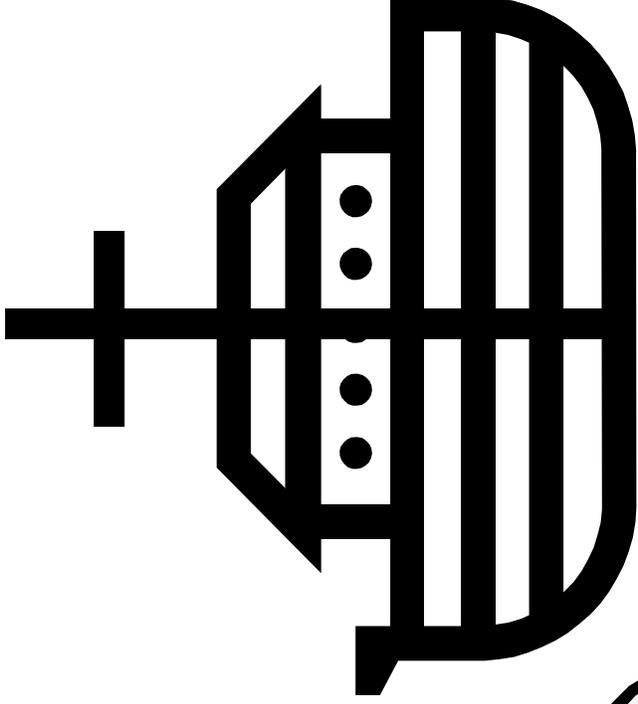
Show students the diagram below and have them take turns retelling the lesson, OR Show or redraw the diagram, restating important points, while children draw the diagram on their own paper, OR Use diagram as a coloring/take-home sheet.



CURSE REVERSED



New Creation in Christ



CURSED



Old Creation