



Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9:8-17 and Its Relevance to Global Warming and Flooding in Port Harcourt

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Abstract. The rising spate of flood in the global space majorly attributed to global warming in recent times makes is alarming. The devastations caused by floods cannot but make Christians to wonder if God has reneged on his promise in the Noahic covenant. The problem of this paper therefore, is to examine the validity of the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9:8-17 in relation to the challenges of global warming and flooding in Port Harcourt and the Niger Delta. It aims to investigate the message of the covenant and find out if global warming as well as flooding has invalidated the covenant. In order to foster an understanding of the text and its implication on global warming and flooding, evaluative model of Justin Ukpong is employed. It was found out that the flood in the covenant was not regional, but the floods experienced today are regional. It was also discovered that the flood of Genesis which the covenant refers to, had divine origin, though necessitated by human disobedience, but the contemporary floods, which emanated from the refusal of humans to care for nature as demonstrated in the covenant, is human cause and can be reversed by human adjustment. It is concluded that, as long as flooding does not wipe out the entire creation at a time, Noah's suzerain has kept his part of the bargain. A deliberate return to creation care to reduce the impact of global warming and deliberate actions by government and other stakeholders to address issues aggravating flooding are therefore recommended.

Keywords: Noahic Covenant, Global Warming, Flood, Port Harcourt, Genesis.

1. Introduction

The ecological crisis as well as its attendant devastating effects on the world is undeniable. Tsai (2015:1) notes that "Whatever one's view of the details of any particular debated ecological problem, all can agree that there are multiple ecological crises

with which we must reckon in today's world". The challenge associated with flooding, attributed to global warming, ranks top among them. White, in his seminal article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967), accuses Christianity for being responsible for the ecologic crisis. By using the plow method change as an example, White points out that man's relation to soil profoundly changed from being part of nature to the exploiter of nature. White claims that "especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," and traces it to the story of the creation in Genesis chapter 1 where "God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes" (1967:1205, Olusakin & Udoh, 2018:77, Olusakin, 2019a:76). Cha (2012:89) however explains that White's argument regarding the exploitative attitude of Christians towards nature is mainly based on his interpretation of the Genesis mandate for humans to "have dominion" over the rest of living things.

White's contribution in this regard is not novel. Feuerbach, for example, had earlier commented: "Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians; the Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul" (1957:287). However, Tsai acknowledges that it is in response to White's accusation that the ecological crisis deserves deeper attention from the theological field today (2015:1, Olusakin, 2019a:77), even though Pihkala has identified the work of Liberty Hyde Bailey in the early 20th century as foundational for what we now refer to as eco-theology (2016:268). It was in furtherance of this cause that at the 1990 Moscow Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders Conference thirty-two eminent scientists and two hundred and seventy-one spiritual leaders challenged religious communities and scientists to join hands in fighting for the preservation of the environment. In an open letter

they expressed their concern about the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, obliteration of forests, rapid extinction of species and the possibility of nuclear war (Dyk, 2009:187).

Many have tried to resolve the perceived indifference of Christianity towards ecological issues. For example, Northcott presents a new ecological reading of concepts such as covenant, land, justice and natural law in the Bible and the Christian traditions, and finds in natural law tradition an ethical vision to reconnect the quest for social justice and the common good in human society and for sustainability and ecological harmony in the natural world (1996). Others, such as Roman Catholic theology, for example, have tried to establish environmental ethics from a liturgical and sacramental perspective (1994). In November 2013, the World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan identified eco-theology and climate justice as two of the key priorities for the working period between 2014 and 2021 (Werner & Jeglitzka, 2016:13).

These attempts and efforts are important and helpful for looking into the important contemporary issue. However, Frick has described the flawed biblical hermeneutic of stewardship and the theological distortions it engenders. He draws upon the works of Robert Murray, Michael Northcott and Karl Barth to establish the theological foundations of a covenantal theology (2014); while Tsai rhetorically affirms that the environmental issue is not contemporary only (2015:2). Tsai's major contribution in this area is that of drawing the attention of theological thinkers to the Noahic covenant as the pivotal passage from which they must draw the imperative for creation care, seeing that the inclusion of the entire creation in God's plan both before and after the deluge is very instructive of God's passion for its preservation. This is the same motif in the work of Barrick who argues:

God's desire to provide a climatic environment suitable to the preservation of plant, animal, and human life on the planet, evident in his promise that the environment will be stable, provides a model for mankind in his vice-regency; they must follow practices that contribute to the preservation of a stable environment (2012:1).

While Tsai's and Barrick's calls for a return to the Noahic covenant as a viable approach to solving our current environmental challenges are worthy of emulation, this study narrows the scope of the context to the flooding that is currently bedeviling the society and rendering many homeless. Accordingly, the significance of the Noahic covenant in biblical theology is highlighted, the state of global warming in

general and flooding in particular especially in Port Harcourt is reviewed. The Noahic covenant is analyzed and its implications for man with regards to flooding is considered using the evaluative model of Justin Ukpong. The Justin Ukpong's evaluative model, especially the second approach, while recognizing the historical-critical method of Biblical exegesis as its starting point, employ a Biblical text to critique a particular issue in society or church life (Ukpong, 1999: 319)

2. Significance of the Noahic Covenant in Biblical Theology

The concept of "covenant" is a pivotal one in the Bible. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament utilize words denoting this idea, and their contexts reveal how crucial certain covenants were in explaining the actions which followed (Kent, 1985:289, Olusakin & Essang, 2024: 268, Olusakin & Asanga, 2025:137). The covenants mentioned in the Old Testament include: Noahic (Gen 6: 18; 8:20-9: 17); Abrahamic (Genesis 15, 17); Mosaic or Sinaitic (Exo. 19:5, 20); Palestinian (Deuteronomy 29-30); Davidic (2 Sam 7:4-16; 23:5); and New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36-37). In addition, some would posit by deduction an Edenic Covenant, and would separate the Mosaic into Sinaitic and Levitical (cf. Busenitz, 1999:186). It is clear that from an early stage in the Christian era, the significance of the covenant concept in biblical theology was recognized. Such is noticeably reflected in the canonical nomenclature applied to Christian Scripture: The Old and New Testaments (Williamson, 2007:19). However, the Noahic covenant seems to have been overlooked in biblical scholarship until recent times (Chalmers, 2009:207-208)

However, Hughes accentuates its place as "the very first covenant in the Bible, and as such one that informs every covenant to follow (the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenants)" (2004:147). For Reno, the covenant with Noah is "the foundation for... the subsequent, sanctifying covenant begun with Abraham, given full form on Sinai, and completed on Golgotha (2010:143). Rabali (2004:19-21) summarizes Robertson's six characteristics that are noticeable in the Noahic covenant. They are: the covenant with emphasizes the close interrelation of the creative and redemptive actions of God; it shows that God's grace is particular as it seen in God's favour to Noah; the covenant with shows God's intention to deal with families in His covenant relationships (9Gen6:18); and the covenant is a covenant of preservation. Others are: the covenant possesses a distinctively universalistic aspect (9:10); and the seal of the

covenant emphasizes the gracious character of the covenant. To the list above, one could add that the deployment of the rainbow in the sky as a token of the covenant is another feature that distinguishes the Noahic covenant from other covenants. This will be discussed later. Again, the universal nature of the covenant is clearly portrayed in the rainbow, unlike subsequent covenants which, to be betokened with things like circumcision and Sabbath, were more sectarian in nature. Summarily, it could also be said that the Noahic covenant covered most or all the features of other covenants (Busenitz, 1999:184).

3. Historical and Literary Background to the Text (Gen. 9:8-17)

From 18th to the early 20th century a number of theories on the authorship of Genesis were postulated culminating in the developed Documentary Hypothesis. The most influential scholar in this area was Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). The Documentary Hypothesis rejected Mosaic authorship and replaced it with a hypothetical theory that placed the final edition of Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch in the postexilic period. However, the points raised against Mosaic authorship do not preclude the possibility that Moses might have written substantial parts of the Pentateuch. In spite of all the work done, the authorship and prehistory of the Genesis text are still a mystery (McKeown, 2008:20). This does not in any way question the authenticity of the book. A feature of recent Pentateuchal scholarship has been the tendency of certain scholars to direct attention to what they sometimes refer to as 'the final form of the text', that is the form in which the Pentateuch actually appears in the OT, as distinct from the sources and traditions which lie behind, or beneath the surface of, the biblical text itself (Whybray, 2001:54).

Genesis, the book of the beginning, lives out its name to the fullest. From a Judeo-Christian point of view, it is the story of how everything in the world – man, animals, and the various contours of the earth – came to be. The most obvious thing about the genre of Genesis is that it is prose narrative (with some embedded poetry of various kinds). For Poythress, however, Genesis is not only prose narrative, but a giant-sized instance, in comparison to almost any of the documents that have been recovered in other languages of the ancient Near East (2016:224).

The Noahic covenant was established within the context of the Flood. According to the text, in seeing that the world was corrupt, God decided to execute judgment upon the earth he had created. This included

humans, animals, creeping things and the birds in the sky (Gen. 6:7). However, Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, due to his righteous life and was God commanded to build an Ark. The aim was to protect a covenant remnant, Noah's line, so that in entering into the Ark this family might escape the wrath to come, so that when the catastrophic judgment of God came upon the earth, the wicked and corrupted world would perish while the covenant community inside the Ark would be delivered from this sentence of damnation (Jeon, 2013:181). Noah's family was not the only beneficiary of this grace, two of every living thing were also spared and were made to enter the ark. Three passages revealed the nature of this covenant: Gen 6:17-22; 8:20-22; 9:8-17. The earlier statements about the covenant in the first two scriptures preceded its inauguration and implementation after the flood (Busenitz, 1999:183). The passage belonging to the Priestly author, documents the implementation or ratification of the covenant of God with Noah, which is now extended to Noah's descendants, all humans and all living creatures on earth (Hiebert, 2022:87, Busenitz, 1999:183, Rojas, 2017:12)

4. Analysis of Genesis 9:8-17

V. 8-10 show that this covenant with Noah was to include all the descendants of Noah and all generations to come. All living creatures of every kind were also included. In speaking to Noah in v. 11 he mentioned what he would do (establish a covenant) and what he would not do (never again would he send a flood to destroy all flesh). In v.9, the same thing is said; 'I am establishing a covenant'. The use of the verb 'establish' *qum* is the same as in 6:8. It is the *hiphil* of *qum* also found in 9:11,9:17. It means to rise, raise, establish, confirm. For Hamilton (1990:296), the verb means 'to make to stand, to erect'. It can therefore be said that "God 'erected' a covenant with Noah", not instituting a new one, but fulfilling or implementing his previous word. In the same vein, Arnold (2009:110), referring to v.9, notes that the immediacy of the active participle (I am establishing....) emphasizes the moment in which his promise of a covenant is now being fulfilled. *Heqim berit* is different from *karat berit* (to cut a covenant) which is used to indicate the initiation of a covenant. The *hiphil* of *qum* here as used means to confirm or ratify an already existing covenant. Hence, Arnold (2009:110) argues that Noah was already in a covenant relationship with God. God had already fulfilled his pre-flood promise to him by delivering him from the flood and now he is extending his covenant with him to his descendants, animals (v.10), all future generations (v. 12) and all flesh on the earth (v. 17) (c.f. Hamilton, 1990:296). This earlier covenant is

possibly God's covenant with Adam (Rojas, 2017:8). Busenitz (1999:183), Tsat (1989: 25-26) posit that the expression in the first part of v.9 which is literally rendered thus "And I, behold I am utterly establishing my covenant with you...." shows that God was the author of the covenant. Rojas (2017:9) confirms the same line of thought while referring to the expression "my covenant", but adds that the expression, further supported by the marker *et*, implies that the covenant is not new, it is an already existing one that God was sharing with Noah. In v.10, the covenant is extended to animals, proving that its validity is not dependent on the acceptance of its promise by the recipients, because animals are not capable of receiving a covenant. This shows God's concern for animals and other creatures (Hamilton, 1990:296, Wiersbe,2007:47). The importance of this for environmental preservation cannot be over emphasized.

In v.11, God said "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. The use of *'ittkem* 'with you' (plural) here in contrast with *'ittak* 'with you' (singular) in 6:18, shows that Noah is not the only recipients of this covenant, the sons were there. Two things are identified in this verse. With the use of 'never again', God states that all flesh shall not be cut off by the waters of a flood and that there shall not be flood that will destroy the earth again. Bandstra (2008:487) note that the verb *karet* is better translated as 'cut back' or 'truncated' instead of 'cut off', because all flesh was not cut off in the first flood.

'All flesh' refers to all humans and animals and the promise is that there will not be such a 'global' flood that will destroy all flesh and the earth the way it did in the Flood. It is possible that there will be smaller floods that destroy many and cause considerable devastation, but this covenant does not anticipate a global destruction through flood. This is the essence of the promise and the extent of the promise is recorded in v.16: it is an everlasting covenant (Busenitz, 1999:185-186).

To authenticate the covenant, he gave sign. The sign of a rainbow. Hamilton (1990: 297) notes that at the three critical stages in the history of mankind in the Torah, 3 important signs were given. They are: Sabbath at Sinai while giving the Mosaic Law (Ex.31:16-17); rainbow at the reestablishment of mankind after the flood; and circumcision at the birth of the Hebrew nation (Gen.17:11, Rom. 4:9-12) (cf. Wiersbe,2007:47). What is unique about this sign given by God in the Noahic covenant is, instead of reminding the recipients of their obligations, it is

meant to remind God of his covenant (vv.15-17). To "remember" is not just recollection but the putting into effect of an action. Biblically, it is often the case that when one remembers, the past is actualized in present experience. The sign inspires the faithfulness of God. The same Hebrew word *qeshet* is used for rainbow and bow. Bow is a symbol of war, but as Schaeffer notes, this has been reinterpreted here. As a sign of the covenant, bow ceases to be a sign of combat, becomes a symbol of peace and well-being. Its placement in the cloud shows the end of God's hostilities against humans (cited in Hamilton, 1990:297).

The foregoing shows that God established his covenant with Noah and his sons, which was a fulfillment or implementation of the already existing covenant. This covenant, which is an expanded version of the one in Gen 6, extends the scope of its beneficiaries to Noah's descendants, all humans and animals on the earth. Hiebert's (2022:87) argument is important in understanding the purpose of the covenant. According to him, the Noahic covenant stabilizes creation by establishing a relationship between God and all of creation. Its aim is to reestablish the order of creation established by God in Gen1:1-2:4a and make sure that the orders of creation last all times so that the earth and all of its life will not be destroyed again (9:15)". This covenant does not however, remove the curse following the Fall, but the condition of life on earth is preserved by it. The covenant has enormous implications for the environment. God cares for humans and other creatures and entered into an everlasting covenant with them. This everlasting relationship he has established with the creation is expected to spur harmonious relationship between humans and other creation. The relationship of care and not of greedy exploitation as it seen in the world today. If humans as God's vice-regents on earth, created in God's image understand their responsibility, there will not be unbridled exploitation of nature which has now led to ecological crisis (Olusakin, 2019b:233)

The central point of the covenant, which is germane to the problem of this paper, is that all flesh and the earth would not be wiped out by flood at a time. This shows God's resolve to preserve humans and nature. The sign of rainbow is put in the clouds as a proof of God's faithfulness to the promise. The sign is to remind him of the covenant he made with humans and all creatures. Humans and all creatures are not expected to do anything in this covenant: it is God that will see the sign and remember the covenant. Verses 13-17, states thus:

I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I

bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

The word 'bow' appears 3 times in the scripture quoted above, 'sign' appears 2 times, while 'I will remember' appears 2 times, all, we believe, are for emphasis and all revolve around the covenant that 'never again' will flood 'truncate or cut back' all flesh or destroy the earth.

While it is certain that God keeps his covenant and he has used rainbow to remind himself of this covenant which according to him is eternal, the question ordinary contemporary Christian will ask is whether or not the Noahic covenant is still valid. This is against the backdrop of the devastating effects of global warming and flooding ravaging the world. Humankind seems to be gradually returning the earth to the prediluvian state that occasioned the flood in Noah's time. Through increase in population, abuse of technological advancement, improper farming systems, bush burning, gas flaring and other human activities that are responsible for global warming, the rate of flooding among others, has drastically increased which has displaced many and this has a lot of effects on sustainable development. Has this situation reversed or invalidated the covenant? In what follows, the above question is evaluated in the light of the Noahic covenant. It is however important to examine the concepts of global warming and flooding especially as they relate to the experience of Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta.

5. Global Warming

Global warming is increase in the average temperature of Earth's near surface, air and oceans (Gina, 2010:60). Global warming is often used interchangeably with the term climate change, but climate change in actual sense means a long-term change in statistics of weather pattern over periods of time ranging from decades to millions of years (Gina, 2010:59). Climate change is wider than global warming but includes it. Climate change includes both warming and cooling trends in temperature (Olofintoye and Sule, 2010:34). Global warming as natural or human induced increase in the average global temperature of the atmosphere near earth's surface. According to them, the temperature near the

surface is determined by the amount of sunlight the earth receives; the amount of sunlight the earth reflects; the retention of heat by the atmosphere; the evaporation and condensation of water vapour (Botkin and Keller, 1998:448).

Naturally, the earth is warmed through the activities of naturally occurring greenhouse gases. These greenhouses, through the process called greenhouse effect, trap the heat in the atmosphere and radiate it back to the earth. This keeps the earth's surface warm and at roughly +15°C (Singh, Singh and Gupta, 2008: 444, cf Mastrandrea and Schneider 2009:1, Olusakin, 2014:46). Singh, *et al* (2008:445) while explaining the process state that short wave radiation reaches the earth from the sun unhindered. The earth also releases long wave radiation through the atmospheric window into the outer space. About 10% of this is said to go out to the space, while the atmosphere retains and/or absorbs substantial portion of it like 90% and radiates energy back to the earth in what is called greenhouse flux.

The greenhouse flux keeps the earth warm, or else the earth will be so cold that no species can survive there. The gases that perform this function are called greenhouse gases. They occur in minute quantities accounting for about 1% of the gaseous volume, but play critical role in regulating the earth's temperature. These gases include carbon dioxide, argon, water vapour, ozone, methane and others. The excessive increased concentration of these gases in the atmosphere from the wake of the Industrial Revolution, leads to trapping of more infrared radiation. This results in enhanced greenhouse effect which in turn increases the global mean temperature (Singh *et al* 2008:445). The consequent increase in the global mean temperature due to enhanced greenhouse effect is called global warming.

This is not the first time the world would either warm or cool. Mastrandrea and Schneider (2009:2) record that since the formation of the earth about 4.6 billion years ago, it had warmed and cooled many times. Factors necessitating it then included massive volcanic eruptions, changes in the intensity of energy emitted by the sun, variation in earth position both in its orbit and in the inclination of its spin axis. They state further that about 1.8 million to 11, 500 years ago, the earth experienced the period of fairly regular cycles of colder glacier. This took place during the ice age or Pleistocene epoch. Glacial period occurred at 100,000 years intervals. An interglacial period began about 10,000 years when the last ice-age ended. Prior to the ice-age, an interglacial period occurred about 125, 000 years ago (2009:2).

Mastrandrea and Schneider state further that during these periods, there would be a natural increase in the atmosphere, of the greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane from increased plant and animal life. But dramatic increase of these gases witnessed since 1750s has been caused by rapid growth of the human population and development in technology and agriculture (2009:2). Anthropogenic causes are largely responsible for the currently experienced global warming. These human activities include burning of fossil fuels which add 5.4 billion metric tons of carbon each year to the atmosphere. Deforestation adds 1.6 billion metric tons per year. Human activities also emit other greenhouse gases like chlorofluorocarbons, ozone, methane and nitrous oxide (Botkin and Keller, 1998:448). Other human activities include agriculture; land use changes and industrial processes like cement production, landfills and wastes, refrigeration, foam blowing and solvent use (Uchegba and Ugwuanyi, 2009:168). Landfills as a way of managing waste for example, is said to emit methane which is the third largest anthropogenic emission source, accounting for about 12% of global methane emission or nearly 750 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Landfill gas contains about 50% methane, about 50% carbon dioxide and a trace amount of non-methane organic compound (Arokoyu and Welu, 2008:172).

Scientific findings have shown that greenhouse gases have now risen to levels higher than any time in the last 650 years. For example, measurements of carbon dioxide trapped in the air bubbles in the Antarctic ice sheet shows that during the 160 years before the industrial revolution, the concentration of Carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere varied from approximately 200 to 300ppm. At the beginning of industrial revolution about 130 years ago, CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere was 280ppm. At present, its concentration is said to be approximately 400ppm with an increase rate of 0.5% per year. According to projection by 2050, it may rise to about 450ppm 15 times the pre-industrial level (Botkin and Keller, 1998:450). Ogbe adds that temperatures have been very high for more than a decade. Coastal shorelines have retreated; Island nations are losing habitable land and glaciers are melting in five continents (2008:47). According to him, it is now possible to sail around James Ross Island formerly connected by ice to the mainland Antarctica which is happening for the first time in recorded history (Ogbe, 2008:46).

During the 20th century, sea level was said to have risen by 10 to 20 cm. Two factors lead to rise in sea level: delivering of water into the sea as mountain

glaciers and land ice melts and thermal expansion of water within the ocean as the temperature of the water rises. The two factors are necessitated by global warming and have been experienced in recent times. For example, the glaciers in Switzerland have decreased by two third and Mount Kenya has lost 92% of its mass (Ogbe, 2008:52). Also, due to increase in temperature, reduction of rainfall, some lakes have reduced in water volume. For instance, the basins of Niger, Lake Chad and Senegal have experienced a 40-60% decrease in total available water (Ogbe, 2008:52). In research carried out in northeast Nigeria on the impact of climate change in Nigeria by Odjugo, it was discovered that Lake Chad has reduced in size from 22, 902km² in 1963 to 1,304km² in 2000. This according to Odjugo, was caused by increasing temperature, decreasing rainfall amount and duration, frequent and prolonged drought and desert encroachment (2009:121). In the Niger Delta, mangrove trees and palms are dying due to rise in sea level and hurricane occurrences (Ogbe, 2008:49, cf. Olusakin, 2014, Olusakin, 2020a).

6. Flooding in the Niger Delta

Flooding has been identified as a major proof of global warming. This is confirmed by Ologunorisa and Tersoo when they note that “increasing flood risk is now being recognized as the most important sectorial threat from climate change in most parts of the world” (2006:97). Flood is accumulation of too much water that overflow land that is not submerged (Mukophadhya in Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin, 2025:278). Flooding can comprise overflow of a river caused by prolonged seasonal rainfall, rainstorm, snowmelt, dam break, accumulation of rain water in low lying areas with a high-water table, or inadequate storm drainage. It can also result from intrusion of sea water onto coast land during cyclonic/tidal surge (Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin, 2025:278). The effects of flood on the world are enormous. Flood has led to loss of many lives and destruction of properties worth millions of dollars. Sayama *et al* in Okonta & Odior (2024;1) state that about 100 million people are affected by flood worldwide every year. African countries are the most hit with flood. Factors like weak state infrastructure and absence or poor implementation of disaster reduction or prevention policy make many African countries like Nigeria vulnerable to flood and its effect.

According to Mmom and Aifeshi (2013: 209), the causes of floods can be broadly divided into physical (such as climatological forces) and human influences (such as vegetation clearing and urban development). The most common causes of floods are climate related, most notably rainfall. Prolonged rainfall events

according to them, are the most common cause of flooding worldwide. Heavy rainfall and melting glaciers, which are traceable to global warming, lead to rise in sea level and this can result in flooding. Three types of floods are identified in the Niger Delta and indeed in Port Harcourt: riverine, coastal and urban flooding (Zabbey, 2007:8). Many factors make the Niger Delta prone to flooding. These include high rainfall level due to high equatorial temperatures that cause water to evaporate from the ocean. Niger Delta is said to have about 2,000- 3,000 mm of rainfall annually. Also, lowland feature of the delta exposes it to rise in sea level. Apart from the Northeast which rises to about 10-15, most part of the delta is less than 6 meters above the sea level. In addition to the above reasons, continual extraction of oil, load of construction and natural condition of the delta's alluvium soil expose it to flooding (Zabbey, 2007:10).

The effects of flood are enormous. Flood carries vectors to the coastlines and contaminates drinking water, causing cholera. Shellfish could also be contaminated by toxic algae; and the eating of such shellfish could lead to a condition called paralytic shellfish poisoning. Flood could also force people to migrate to a crowded area leading to the outbreak of communicable diseases like tuberculosis. The already insufficient resources in the crowded area will be overstressed, leading to hunger and crisis. Flood also leads to the destruction of crops, property and could gulp billions of naira used as relief package. Flood and erosion remove top soil, destroy roads, affect fresh water resources and threaten lives and properties (Etiosa and Agho, 2007: 9-10). It is on record that in the past century, sea level has risen from 10 to 20 centimeters (Onwumere, 2011:1). Also, it is projected that the Deltas are vulnerable to sea level rise and that the current trend of sea level rise will be moderate to 20250 (Ogba & Utang, 2010:3). This portends serious flooding situation in the Niger Delta region.

Rivers State is specifically vulnerable to flood due to the overflow banks of rivers. Hence, Port Harcourt forms the major focus of this section. Also, its lowland feature exposes it to a higher risk of flooding. This can result in the flooding of coastal area by salt water and make land to be infertile for agriculture (Onwumere, 2011:2). This has serious economic and health implications in the area. Ologunorisa and Tersoo record that extreme rainfall pattern is the major cause of flood worldwide (2006:97). It is projected that as rainfall increases, potentially damaging flood will also increase and as urbanization increases in Port Harcourt, flood will be on the increase. Flooding is common in Port Harcourt, especially in places like Aba Road, Ikwerre road, Diobu, Nkpolu, Rumuigbo,

Olu Obasanjo area and others and its occurrence results in pathetic situation. Many people have been rendered homeless due to floods while roads have become impassible. Flood paralyzes economic activities in the city of Port Harcourt. When major roads like Ikwerre road, Mgbooba road linking Port Harcourt to Bayelsa, and market junction in Aba Road are flooded, motorists experience serious hardships. One of the researchers lived in Mgbooba from 2005-2006 as a tenant and witnessed flood in his compound 3 times, during which he lost precious belongings. Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin (2025:308) found that highly flooded areas in Port Harcourt include Rumuewhara New Layout/Eneka, NTA/Apara Link Road, Abacha Road, GRA Phase 11 and Nkpolu Road1, Rumuigbo, with floodwaters reaching up to 200mm in some areas., while moderately flooded locations include Salem Close and Obiwali Road and low flooded area include Abanna Street and Akwaka Street.

A devastating flood occurred between July and October in 2012, affecting 25 of the 36 states in Nigeria, resulting in 363 deaths, 5,851 people were injured, 3,891,304 people were affected, while 387,153 persons were displaced (Okonta & Odior, 2024:1). Though the 2012 flood did not affect many places in Port Harcourt, in places like Elioparawon and Mgbooba, houses were submerged. Between January 2020 and April 2024, flood disaster was said to cause over 120 fatalities in the Niger Delta (Niger Delta Weekly, 2024). On September 21, 2021, Port Harcourt residents experienced a severe flooding that affected both Federal Road Safety Corp (FRSC) office and the Port Harcourt Shopping Mall (SPAR). The flood that resulted from rain that lasted for several hours, overwhelmed the FRSC office and disrupted business operations at SPAR. Many roads in Port Harcourt were submerged by flood that day leaving many commuters stranded while many residents lost their properties (Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin, 2025: 283). In March 2024 alone, more than 200 homes were reportedly destroyed while several residents were displaced as a result of flooding caused by tidal surge in Odioma and Sangara communities in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. In the early hours of 22nd July, 2024, there was also a severe flood in Port Harcourt which led to the destruction of many properties (Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin, 2025: 283). In April 2025, the head of operations in Port Harcourt Zonal office of the National Emergency Management Agency, Eric Ebhodaghe warned that 15 local government areas in Rivers State are at risk of flood disaster in 2025 (Nwisi, 2025). The above are just few examples of the frequent occurrences and devastating effects of flood in the Niger Delat and Port

Harcourt specifically. Raining season bring untold hardship to the people of Port Harcourt every year due to devastating flood leading to loss of lives and valuables.

It is on record that in the past century, sea level has risen from 10 to 20 centimeters, (Onwumere, 2011:1). Also, it is projected that the deltas are vulnerable to sea level rise and that the current trends of sea level rise will be moderate to 2050. This portends serious flooding situations in the Niger Delta region. Rivers State is specifically vulnerable to flood due to the overflow banks of rivers. Also, its lowland feature exposes it to a higher risk of flooding. This can result in the flooding of coastal area by salt water and make land to be infertile for agriculture (Onwumere, 2011:2). This has serious economic and health implications in the area. Predictions about continuous and damaging flooding in Port Harcourt are given every year by the Federal Government through its Metrological Department and others. Olgunorisa and Tersoo record that extreme rainfall pattern is the major cause of flood worldwide (2006:97). It is projected that as rainfall increases, potentially damaging flood will also increase and as urbanization increases in Port Harcourt, flood is bound to be on the increase (Ologunorisa 2004:38). This shows that flood situations will worsen in Port Harcourt in coming years. How then is flood as experienced by the people of Port Harcourt to be understood in the light of the Noahic covenant?

7. Noahic Covenant and Its Implications on Flooding in Port Harcourt

It has been stated that flooding is one of the major impacts of global in Port Harcourt. Hence, it is the major focus of this section. In evaluating the question of whether or not the Noahic covenant is still valid giving the current ecological crisis, certain points need to be made. One, Beside the lesson to humans to preserve nature the same way God demonstrated in the covenant, the covenant revolves around the flood. It is important to ask, which type of flood is God referring to? It is apparent that it is a reference to the Flood in Genesis which wiped out 'all flesh' apart from the family of Noah. What then was its nature and does the flood experienced presently look like it? Though there has been debate on whether the flood of Noah was regional or global, these researchers believe it was 'global', though the idea of a 'globe' was not there in the Hebrew language. It wiped out the whole of human race except the family of Noah (Paul, 2018:35). It is also recorded that the earth *'erets* was destroyed by flood and Genesis 9:11 states that it will never again be destroyed with flood. The earth here refers to the

place where mankind and animals live, which was swallowed up by water. It can therefore be said that the destruction referred to here is the possibility of humans living upon the earth (Paul, 2018: 32). That is the destruction of the earth mentioned here does not imply that it ceases to exist, but that it is brought to a state whereby no human or any other creature can live upon it. The flood referred to in the covenant is the one that will wipe out all flesh, both human and animals at a time, the way it did in Genesis. The covenant does not rule out the possibilities of regional floods that can have devastating effects. It does not also rule out the possibility of God's judgment upon some human beings, but may not be in form of universal catastrophe that will wipe out all creatures at once like it happened in the Genesis Flood. God has said in his heart after smelling the aroma of Noah's offering that: "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done" (Gen.8:21). It only rules out the possibility of this happening through flood. In 2 Peter 3:10-11, there is the possibility of the elements of this world being destroyed by fire one day, but the Noahic covenant will still be valid till then.

Two, it is important to note that the current ecological crisis which has flood as one of its effects is a product of human activities, not a divine act like the Flood of Genesis, though God brought the flood as a punishment for the world that was so corrupt that he regretted creating it. If these activities resulting in the current ecological crisis are not reversed or minimized, scientists have predicted that the crisis will worsen. They however assure that reduction in human activities that aggravate the crisis can end it with time. Three, though humans have resorted to the activities that necessitated the judgment of God in the time of Noah, which can aggravate the anger and judgment of God, it is certain according to the covenant that such judgment cannot be in form of a global flood. God destroyed humans and the earth in Genesis because it was corrupt and was full of violence. To be corrupt in this context means not being used for its intended purpose. Humans exist to radiate the glory of God, but what humans do in the contemporary world seems to be worse than this. The situation now seems to be worse than the way it was in Genesis. Humans have not only corrupted themselves; nature has been devastatingly affected by human activities. Humans need to check their activities to be able to reverse the ecological crisis.

With regards to global warming and flooding in the contemporary time, certain measures need to be taken

to ameliorate its effects. In Port Harcourt for example, scholars have suggested certain measures to resolve the problem of flooding. Among others, Okey-Ejiowhor, Pepple & Edwin (2025:310), for example, recommend the following to better tackle flooding in Port Harcourt. They include: Development of a comprehensive Flood Resilient Design Framework (RSDF) that will integrate architectural adaptation strategies, stakeholders' engagement and policy recommendation; sustainable drainage system that will look like the natural drainage of urban area; building of low-cost houses in areas that are not or less prone to flood in Port Harcourt metropolis where victims of flood can temporarily stay until the arrival of dry season; and finally, equipment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), though a federal agency, by Rivers State government, to further strengthen the agency as it carries out its responsibility of evacuating flood victims and distribute relief materials. To address the problem of global warming, there is the need to stabilize atmospheric concentration of green-house gases which is achieved by reducing man-made green-house emissions. The strategies include the use of renewable and alternative energy like solar power, wind power and geothermal power and switching to hydrogen fuel. It also includes management of carbon in underground geological formation and carbon sequester in vegetation. Carbon sequesters includes improved agricultural practice, reducing oxidation of soil organic matter, enhancing soil texture to trap more carbon as well as protecting the wetlands. There is also the need to reduce the ongoing depletion of the Ozone layer Singh, (Singh and Gupta 2008:454, Olusakin, 2019a:74).

The place of the church in addressing global warming and flooding is also important due to its comparative advantages (c.f. Olusakin, 2020b:12). The church in Port Harcourt has a lot to do in this direction. Her participation in the effort to control the menace can include: rereading Biblical texts for the purpose of ascertaining what the Bible says especially with regards to human's relationship with nature; planting trees and observe proper recycling and disposal of waste; creating awareness about the reality and devastating effects of global warming and flooding as well as how to control them. The church needs to actively participate in ecological debate. Churches can network or form Faith Based Organizations or collaborate with other non-governmental organizations to successfully carry out awareness on the danger of and the control of global warming and flooding (Olusakin, 2019a:78-79).

8. Conclusion

God's creation at the beginning, according to the Genesis account, was perfect. That included the earth and the things in it. With time, man's wickedness was so repugnant before God that He decided to raise a new generation for Himself in the person of Noah (who had found favour in His sight), Noah's family members, and some animals. After the flood, Noah made a sacrifice to God. In response, God entered a covenant with Noah, humankind, animals, and the entire earth, never to destroy the earth (and all that is in it) again by a flood. He then gave the rainbow as a sign of His fidelity to His promise: whenever He sees the rainbow, He would remember the covenant. From the human side, whenever the rainbow is sighted, it reminds and assures of God's promise. For the community of faith, therefore, God has not renege in His promise. Instead, it is human who has been engaged in practices that have 'corrupted' the earth, akin to the situation that brought about the deluge in the text. It is human, therefore, who needs to adjust by desisting from those practices. The Christian community is hereby called upon to take eco-theology seriously. It should be taught in seminaries, Sunday school, and even incorporated in the curriculum for primary and secondary schools. The Church should also sustain it through emphasizing the moral obligation and gratefulness approaches.

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