

NOAH'S SIN AND THE CURSE ON CANAAN

TEXT: GENESIS 9:18-29

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Genesis 9:18 we have the three sons of Noah. The three sons of Noah are described as the heads of the three divisions of the human race (9:19). It is interesting to note that the order is given as Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18).
2. I say it is interesting because Japheth was the oldest of the three (cf. 10:21). Shem was the youngest but he is always mentioned first because the Lord Jesus came through the line of Shem (cf. Luke 3:23, 36). "And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem..." (9:26).
3. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob came from the line of Shem. Worship of the true God was preserved by the Jews amidst all the false pagan religions that surrounded them. Furthermore, Christianity was first proclaimed and spread abroad by Semites.
4. It began in Jerusalem, and then spread unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).
5. "God shall enlarge Japheth..." (9:27). This prophecy indicates great prosperity and the multiplication of descendants.
6. "And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (9:27b). The Christian Gentile nations have superseded the family of Shem in religious privileges.
7. The apostle Paul said to the Jews, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:28). Soon the Gospel was spread by the Gentiles.
8. "God shall enlarge Japheth..." (9:27). Furthermore, the political control of human affairs is now in the hands of the line of Japheth.
9. After the flood, it appeared that everything would go well with Noah and his three sons. There was to be a new start with a new world washed clean from all of the wickedness that had prevailed before the flood.
10. Yet in the days following the flood we see a sad story of sinful failure (9:20-22). W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is evident that the Divine judgment at the Flood had not extirpated the evil in human nature, and as we ponder this solemn lesson, we should take care to apply it to ourselves. It is much easier to feel sad about Noah than to be on the watch about our own life" (*Genesis*).
11. The shameful incident recorded in Genesis 9 teaches us that their action affected their descendants, and the entire human race.

I. THE SINS

II. THE SHAME

III. THE CURSE

I. THE SINS (9:20-22)

1. "And Noah began to be an husbandman (farmer), and he planted a vineyard" (9:20). Noah's sin was committed in the course of his ordinary work as a farmer.
2. There was nothing wrong with planting a vineyard, but it was a terrible sin to get drunk (9:21).
3. W.H. Griffith Thomas referred to "the unutterable sadness of this sin of a servant of God" (*Genesis*).
4. There are many warnings in the Bible about the dangers of wine. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
5. Proverbs 23:29 says, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine" (cf. Proverbs 23:29-35).
6. The Bible warns that drunkards cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, **drunkenness**, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).
7. Furthermore, I Corinthians 6:10 says drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Drunkenness is a bar to heaven and a door to hell.
8. Someone put it this way -- A place where strong drink is sold is sometimes a called a Bar -- that's true,

A BAR to heaven, a door to hell; whoever named it, named it well.

A BAR to manliness and wealth; a door to want and broken health.

A BAR to honor, pride and fame; a door to grief and sin and shame.

A BAR to hope and a BAR to prayer; a door to darkness and despair.

A BAR to honored, useful life; a door to brawling, senseless strife,

A BAR to all that's true and brave; a door to every drunkard's grave.

A BAR to joys that home imparts; a door to tears and aching hearts.

A BAR to heaven, a door to hell; whoever named it, named it well.

-- Author Unknown

9. After this account in Genesis 9, Noah's sin is never mentioned again. In Ezekiel 14, Noah (along with Daniel and Job) as a righteous man.
10. And in the New Testament he is repeatedly referred to as a man of faith (cf. Hebrews 11:7; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 2:5).
11. While there have been believers who foolishly got drunk and learned from their mistakes, there have also been many drunkards who drank themselves into a drunkard's grave and went straight to hell.
12. The Bible says, Elah the king of Israel, was "drinking himself drunk" in the house of his steward when his servant Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him (I Kings 16:9, 10).
13. There are many warnings in the Bible about drinking. The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!...Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink" (Isaiah 5:11, 22).
14. There are many warnings in the Bible about drinking wine, but the story of Noah in Genesis 9 is the first (9:21).
15. Isaiah 28:1 says, "Woe to the...drunkards of Ephraim."
16. Isaiah 28:7, 8 says, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."
17. Associated with the sin of drunkenness is the sin of immodesty (cf. 9:21, 22). The two sins of intemperance and impurity have often been associated. They are the devil's twins.
18. The prophet Habakkuk said, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory" (Hab. 2:15, 16).
19. Some of these grandstanding politicians are making a fuss over rape on college campuses. A few months ago, Governor Cuomo signed his "Enough is Enough" legislation to combat sexual assault on college campuses statewide. The new law requires all colleges to adopt a set of comprehensive procedures and guidelines, including a uniform definition of affirmative consent.

20. But the real problem is alcohol. Studies have indicated that more than 80 percent of campus sexual assaults involve alcohol. Frequently both the man and the woman have been drinking.
21. It is far more sensible to prohibit drinking on campuses, and to establish curfews, and keep men away from the women's dorms, etc.
22. On an average weekend night, one out of every ten cars you pass on the road is driven by a drunk driver.
23. About 6,000 babies are born every year with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, literally "pickled" in the womb by a drunken mother.
24. Every Christian should take the same pledge as Abraham Lincoln:
25. "Whereas, the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation, and crime; and believing it our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage" (February 22, 1842).

II. THE SHAME

1. Sin always brings shame. Ephesians 5:12 says, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."
2. It was shameful for a great man like Noah to get drunk and lay uncovered in his tent (9:21).
3. Secondly, it was shameful what his son Ham did. Not only was he guilty of the sin of omission in failing to shield and hide his father's shame (as his brothers later did -- 9:23), but he was also guilty of a sin of commission (9:24).
4. The word "saw" (9:22) means more than a harmless glance. In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Hebrew word translated "saw" is translated "enjoy."
5. "And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy (see) the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God" (Eccl. 3:13).
6. Charles Ryrie said, "The verb *saw* means more than a harmless or accidental look, It indicated that Ham gazed with satisfaction at his father...His unclean thoughts were fed by gazing on his father, and his act bespoke a complete lack of proper filial respect" (*Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*).
7. Ham was also guilty in calling attention to his father's nakedness (9:22). He should have quietly covered his father and not said a word to anyone.

8. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, Ham "had no sense of filial love or even of common decency. We seem to see depravity here, of no ordinary degree" (*Genesis*).
9. In contrast to Ham, Shem and Japheth went backwards into their father's tent, so as not to see their father's nakedness (9:23).
10. Ryrie said, "In this day of nudity and casualness, disrespect, and insolence on the part of children toward their parents, the actions of Noah and his sons almost seem trivial, if not irrelevant. But God did not consider them so" (*Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*).

III. THE CURSE (9:25)

1. This is the third curse mentioned in the book of Genesis (cf. 3:14-17; 4:11).
2. Quite a few years had passed since the flood, and Noah's sons now had children. The curse was upon Ham's son Canaan (9:25; cf. 9:18; 10:6).
3. In addition to pronouncing a curse upon Canaan, Noah pronounced a blessing upon Shem and Japheth (9:26, 27).
4. Three times Noah said that Canaan would be a servant to Shem and Japheth (9:25-27). Noah's prophecy was not immediately fulfilled.
5. At one time it was not the sons of Japheth, but the sons of Ham who built great empires -- the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Babylonians flourished while the sons of Japheth remained in the background.
6. That is, up until the night Daniel the prophet read the writing on the wall, and King Belshazzar was slain (Daniel 5).
7. Erich Sauer wrote, "Under Cyrus the Persian, the Japhetic race entered the arena with victorious strength. Semitic Babylon fell (538 B.C.)...and the Japhethites became the lords of the Orient. Since then no Semitic or Hamitic race has succeeded in breaking the world supremacy of the Japhethites" (*The Dawn of World Redemption*).
8. It is interesting that Shem and Japheth's sons are not mentioned here in our text, only Ham's son Canaan (cf. 9:18).
9. Over the years, people have referred to "the curse of Ham," but the Bible plainly teaches that the curse was put upon Canaan, not on Ham. Furthermore, the curse was not put upon Ham's other sons (cf. 10:6).
10. Much mischief and prejudice have resulted from the misinterpretation of these verses.
11. Some have taught that the curse must have been upon all four of Ham's sons because they are left out of the blessings promised to the descendants of Shem and Japheth (9:26, 27). But it is unwise to draw a conclusion based on what the Bible doesn't say.

12. The curse fell upon Canaan (9:25), and Canaan was the father of the Canaanites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, and the other violent, idolatrous tribes who occupied the land of Palestine (cf. Genesis 10:15-19).
13. Referring to these wicked tribes, Deuteronomy 9:4 says, "But for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee."
14. The subjugation of these people during the days of Joshua was the primary fulfillment of Noah's prediction of servitude for Canaan.
15. Therefore, Noah was speaking prophetically when he pronounced his curse upon Canaan and his descendants. Noah was able to foresee into the future when the curse of Canaan would be realized.
16. Unfortunately, when the Israelites went into the promised land, they failed to destroy the Canaanites, and gradually the Israelites came to embrace the heathenistic idol worship of their Canaanite neighbors.
17. Genesis 9:25 has puzzled people because it is difficult to understand why God cursed Canaan, when it was his father Ham who had sinned.
18. Perhaps because God had already blessed Ham, he could not be cursed by his father. Therefore, the curse fell on Ham's son Canaan (cf. 9:1).
19. But why Canaan? Ham had four sons (10:6).
20. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is perhaps best to understand the matter according to the old Jewish tradition, that Canaan was somehow involved in the sin and was associated with his father in the mockery of Noah. It has been well said that Ham sinned as a son and was punished in his son" (*Genesis*).
21. It has been said that "Ham sinned as a son and was punished in his son."
22. Some have taught that Canaan was with his father Ham when he sinned, but there is no indication in Scripture that Canaan was with his father at that time.

CONCLUSION:

1. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."
2. The sin of Noah and the sin of Ham are recorded as a warning for us. Drinking is dangerous, and it is wise to stay away from it. Proverbs 20:1 says those who are deceived by wine are unwise.
3. Drinking often leads to indecency and immorality. We see this here in Genesis 9, and we see it again in Genesis 19, where drinking wine led to the wicked sin of incest.
4. Sin has terrible and long-lasting consequences. The sin of Noah and the sin of Ham affected their children and their children's children.

5. Another important lesson taught here -- we see here a striking proof of the Divine inspiration of the scriptures.
6. A.W. Pink said, "In the Bible human nature is painted in its true colors: the characters of its heroes are faithfully depicted, the sins of its most prominent personages are frankly recorded. It is human to err, but it is also human to conceal the blemishes of those we admire. Had the Bible been a human production, had it been written by uninspired historians, the defects of its leading characters would have been ignored, or if recorded at all, an attempt at extenuation would have been made. Had some human admirer chronicled the history of Noah, his awful fall would have been omitted. The fact that it is recorded and that no effort is made to excuse his sin, is evidence that the characters of the Bible are painted in the colors of truth and nature, that such characters were not sketched by human pens, that Moses and the other historians must have written by Divine inspiration" (*Gleanings in Genesis*).
7. The Bible is the inerrant Word of God, and only the Bible teaches us the way of salvation (John 3:16).