

GENESIS 9:8-29

(A RAINBOW, A VINEYARD, A BLESSING AND A CURSE)

Although for many people the Bible gets easier to swallow from today's passage on, there will still be lots of stories that are hard to reconcile. We'll work through each as we get to it, but in the end, every one of them is given by God and bears the reliability of His truthfulness.

Some of the toughest concepts are now behind us though – we've worked through God being the Creator, a literal 6 day creation, the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man, people living to hundreds of years old, and a worldwide flood.

I've asked this before and I'll ask it again now, what would be the point of God making up these stories? If they're not true, then what kind of a God are we dealing with? Of course they're true and God expects us to have faith that they are despite the difficulties they present. He even promises through Isaiah to help us along the way – "Come now, and let us **reason together**, says the Lord."

I personally believe that there is a far greater reward for a person who believes these stories and lives his life as a plumber than there is for a lifetime of being a pastor, a Bible teacher, a seminary professor, a missionary, or any other job that makes someone appear religious while not believing what's written here.

I am never more amazed than when I hear a preacher or seminary professor say they don't believe this or that part of the Bible. I mean, I can't think of a stupider waste of time or a more pointless existence than spending your whole life not believing the very thing you've spent your life doing.

One of the people here, right now, was attending a Sunday morning church a few weeks ago and had some questions about the book of Job, which he was reading at the time. He wanted to know about the great beast known as Leviathan. In Job it says this –

His sneezings flash forth light,
And his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning.
¹⁹ Out of his mouth go burning lights;
Sparks of fire shoot out.
²⁰ Smoke goes out of his nostrils,
As *from* a boiling pot and burning rushes.
²¹ His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes out of his mouth –Job 41:18-21

His question was asking if this was really some kind of fire breathing creature like a dragon. The pastor's response was that the Bible will sometimes use local myths and incorporate them into its writings. In essence, God is accommodating His audience... a polite way of saying the story is just a lie.

If God is using a myth about the Leviathan, maybe David is a myth. Maybe Jeremiah the prophet never existed... maybe Jesus was just a guy born out of wedlock with a human father. At what point do we stand up and say, "It just doesn't matter? I can't trust anything the Bible says."

Introduction: Noah was a real man, the flood really happened, and there really were only 8 people who survived to repopulate the world and begin again. Today we're going to venture into the post flood world along with Noah and see how things started off.

Remember this lesson about Bible interpretation – if something is recorded in the Bible, it's there because God wants us to learn from it. It is about His great unfolding plan for the lost human soul. It is a gift and a treasure, so let's handle it carefully and search it diligently for what He is trying to tell us.

Let's do all of this to the glory of God, for the education of our minds, and for the encouragement of our souls.

Text Verse: "For this *is* like the waters of Noah to Me;
For as I have sworn
That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth,

So have I sworn
That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.
¹⁰ For the mountains shall depart
And the hills be removed,
But My kindness shall not depart from you,
Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,”
Says the LORD, who has mercy on you. Isaiah 54:9-10

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name
ever be praised.

I. A Rainbow

Irving Berlin said, *“Blue skies, smiling at me / Nothing but blue skies do I see ...”*

It took a lot of smart people to figure out why the sky is blue. People had to build on the ideas of other people and eventually we figured it out. Aristotle worked on the problem as did Isaac Newton, and many others. The reason why it took so long and so many really intelligent people were needed to figure it out and get it right is because the solution encompasses so many components.

We needed to understand the colors in sunlight, the angle that solar light travels through the atmosphere, the size of little particles that float in the air even to the atmospheric molecules, and also how our eyes perceive color.

It was Isaac Newton who demonstrated that using a prism the white light of the sun contains all the colors of the visible spectrum, so all colors are possible in sunlight. But this didn't answer why the sky is blue.

Later in 1871, Lord Rayleigh formulated how the interaction of atmospheric particles scatters the light waves into short wavelengths which appear more blue and violet.

These short wavelengths scatter a lot more than the longer ones. Because of this the scattered light disperses equally in all directions and so the sky appears saturated with color. The only exception is when something brighter than that saturation appears – like when you look directly at the sun.

When you do, you see all the wavelengths at one time and so they appear white. When we look away from the sun, at just the clear sky, we see light mostly from those shorter, scattered wavelengths like violet, indigo and blue. But we only see the light blue. Why is that? It's because of the way our eyes are made.

Unlike our sense of hearing which can recognize individual instruments in an orchestra, our eyes and brains interpret certain combinations of wavelengths as a single, discrete color. Our visual sense interprets the blue-violet light of the sky as **a mixture** of blue and white light, *and that is why the sky is light blue.*

So the next time you go out and enjoy a beautiful light blue sky, remember that the dust in the air and the cones in your eyes, along with lots of other gifts from God, combine to give you our lovely blue days here on planet earth.

⁸ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

⁹ “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

¹⁰ and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

¹¹ Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Back in Genesis 6:18, we read this concerning the covenant with Noah – “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark— you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

Then in Genesis 8:21, we read this – “And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”

God said he would establish his covenant with Noah if Noah would be obedient to the directives – which were to get onto the ark with his family and to leave the world behind. Noah did exactly that and consigned the world to its just fate. But God carried Noah through the flood and safely to the shores of Ararat where he made his sacrificial offering and God accepted it.

And now, here in chapter 9, God confirms the covenant and Noah becomes the heir of the new world. He is just as much a father to all of us as Adam is because we all come from Adam and then through Noah.

The seed of man continued through, and because of, the obedience of one man. And even more, God made the covenant with all of the animal life with him as well. Should we ever presume that we need to build an outpost on another planet because global warming would flood the earth, we would be as dumb as the ox who eats the grass of the field.

God’s promise has and always will stand firm. The earth will never again be flooded as it was. You can dismiss whatever Al Gore says. Tell him to take it up with God.

Have you ever taken an outdoor shower and seen a little rainbow in the mist around you? It’s a treat to the eyes and a personal gift from the Lord. How much more splendid and striking is a giant rainbow, or even a double rainbow on a summer afternoon! We had one right off our dock just this past week on Tuesday evening.

So what is it that makes a rainbow? It’s the droplets of water in the air that act as tiny prisms. Light enters the droplets, reflects off of the side of them, and then exits. When this happens, the light is broken into a spectrum just like it is in a triangular glass prism.

The angle between the ray of light coming in and the ray coming out of the drops causes different colors from different drops to reach your eye and form a circular rim of color in the sky – a rainbow. In a double rainbow, the second bow is produced when the droplets have two reflections internally. They have to be the just the right size to get two reflections to work.

¹² And God said: “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations:

¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

¹⁷ And God said to Noah, “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

The very fact that this statement is given here tells us without any doubt that there were never rainbows before the flood. It doesn't mean there wasn't rain before the flood, but that the sky, if there was rain, diffused light differently.

In other words, all the way back in Genesis 1 we read about the canopy over the earth, known as the raquia. When we were there we noted that it was probably a solid canopy made of water which had frozen.

Because it was there, light would have come into man's eyes differently and no rainbow would have been produced. After the flood, when the canopy was gone, God knew that the result would be rainbows in the new blue sky of the post flood era. And so He used this new display of wonder and beauty as the sign of the covenant He was confirming.

If you think about it, this is why the covenant was given before the flood, but only confirmed after the flood. Can't you just see how everything in the Bible is so perfectly ordered and so logically placed? Now when we look into the sky and see terrifying storms coming our way, we have the reminder that it is only a temporary and local event.

And the thicker the cloud, the more brightly the bow will shine in it. The great life lesson for us in the rainbow then is that when life's many troubles abound, God's encouragement and reliability abounds so much more. As the sun shines through the waters to produce a bow for our eyes, we are told to have the light of Christ shine through our souls to produce encouraged hope in our hearts.

And the rumbling of the thunder which directs our eyes to the rainbow is like the call of the Holy Spirit to the dead soul who is looking for God and struggling to find Him. Paul tells us the remedy for that dry condition –

“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”

The light of the rainbow for the physical man is like the light of Christ for the spiritual man. We can trust in both as gracious gifts from our wonderful and glorious Creator. Thanking Him, even now, for the precious promises which proceed from His word.

II. A Vineyard

A few weeks ago I said that various verses in long narratives form pivot points within the narrative. Normally these are ideas which are offset from what is happening on both sides of them. We've come across two of them concerning Noah.

The first was in Chapter 6 which was describing the wickedness of man, but when all seemed hopeless we read these words – “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Then right in the middle of the flood account which went on for verse after verse, we read this – “Then God remembered Noah.” If you look for these types of comments as you’re reading, you’ll be able to understand how God is turning the story on that pivot point for the reader and preparing for the new direction in it.

There’s another type of tool God uses in His word is found in the following two verses –

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.

¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

Did anyone here see it? Let me read them again.

For the previous 17 verses, God and Noah were interacting through sacrifices, directives, covenant, promises, and signs. Noah’s sons were mentioned during these verses, but when they were, it was only in conjunction with Noah. Now in these verses something more is added.

If you remember way back in chapter 4 on our sermon about the line of Cain, I stressed one name again and again. And I brought up her name several times in later verses as well. The reason I did this is because her name was important to the coming account and yet when she was mentioned it said almost nothing about her. Let me remind you of that verse –

And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

For what seemed like no reason at all, Naamah was mentioned and never referred to again. But if one missed the significance of her name, then their interpretation of much of the rest of the Bible would be flawed. One name in one verse with seemingly no significance at all and yet so important to what God is telling us.

The verses we just read said, “Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.”

The tool God is giving to us isn’t just trivial information concerning the names of the sons of Noah. Instead, the tool is the introduction of Canaan. As we’ll see later in the Bible, each of the sons of Noah had other children. In fact, in the Table of Nations coming up in Chapter 10, 16 sons are named to these three men and yet here only Canaan is mentioned.

The tool being used is something you’ll see many times throughout the Bible. When something or someone is added for no apparent reason, it is actually often a key to understanding the overall picture of the redemption of man or some other major subject in the Bible.

Look for these and think on them when they come and you will find both deep treasure and access to sound doctrine in your understanding of the Bible.

Every person on earth descends from Noah, but after him, the divisions start. We are all sons of Shem, Ham, or Japheth. If we are a son of Ham, then we might be a son of Canaan. If we are a son of Canaan, then we may be able to discern something about ourselves, just like Jews can discern something about themselves. Pay attention and understand the workings of God.

²⁰ And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.

Almost all commentaries really hammer Noah in these verses, particularly for getting drunk. The terms “sin,” “shame,” “weak,” “imperfect” and on and on are used. Or, commentators will say that Noah didn’t know that he would get drunk from the wine, and so they show him to be naïve in an attempt to relieve him of the guilt they feel he bore in what he did.

But none of the commentaries get to the heart of the matter, nor do they align this account with what Paul says in the New Testament about drinking. He says there –

For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?

Although it may show poor decision making, the problem here isn’t that Noah was drunk. Paul notes the people at the Lord’s Supper were drunk, but he never rebukes them for it. And Noah was in his own house when he was drinking which is exactly what Paul told his fellow Christians to do.

It’s simply unacceptable to pick and choose verses for cross referencing in order to suit one’s own personal convictions about a matter, like being drunk or even merely drinking alcohol, and then to disregard the verses one disagrees with. The Bible is a unified whole and what it proclaims as acceptable is to be treated in that manner, whether we personally like it or not.

Having said that, and before I go on, I am not promoting drunkenness. What I am doing is going where the Bible leads us and not taking the Bible where I want it to go.

The issue in these verses has nothing to do with Noah’s state of drunkenness or his nakedness – he was in his own home. The issue has to do with the actions of Ham and is the entire purpose of why Canaan was introduced into that odd and pivotal verse we looked at a few minutes ago.

Back a few sermons, I said that one of the most important of all Bible rules is to not get our attention sidetracked or our Bible analysis swayed by personal biases or what we already believe.

Noah was minding his own business and his son Ham did what was disgraceful. But again, like the earlier verse, it brings Canaan into the picture. “And Ham, the father of Canaan...” Once again, despite what Ham did, the relevance is on Canaan, not Ham, even though Canaan wasn’t even included in what his father did.

Ham “saw the nakedness of his father and told his two bothers.” We can infer that his words were more than just “dad is lying naked inside his tent.” Instead, it seems that Ham made light of the matter and may have treated Noah with either contempt or levity. In other words, he was at a minimum making jokes about his own father to his brothers.

But his brothers treated their father with a decent, reverent, and obedient respect. Instead of joining Ham in his immoral conduct, they took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of him. And while they did this, they had their faces *were* turned away.

In the book of Habakkuk, we read this comparable verse –

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor,
Pressing *him* to your bottle,
Even to make *him* drunk,
That you may look on his nakedness!

We can act actively or passively in a perverted manner, but either way, the Bible condemns these actions. God calls us to holy living and to act in a manner which maintains both our own dignity and the dignity of others. This is the failure of Ham and it led to the consequences of our next major thought...

III. A Blessing and a Curse

²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.

²⁵ Then he said:

**“Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren.”**

²⁶ And he said:

**“Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.**

**²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant.”**

It may be that the words “what his younger son had done to him” are saying that Ham did more than just speak in an irreverent way about his father. He very well may have actually committed physical perversion against his own dad.

This isn't unlikely and would explain quite a bit that we'll see as we progress through the pages of Genesis. No matter what actually happened though, Noah was severely displeased with Ham because of his actions.

So why did Noah curse Ham's son Canaan instead of him? Again, commentators of past history have inserted Canaan into the account and said he must have participated in what Ham did. But there are two things to consider which dispel that.

The first is that it doesn't explain why Ham wasn't cursed along with Canaan. And more importantly, Canaan isn't ever mentioned. We already answered this in a previous sermon, but let's review the answer.

The reason Canaan is cursed and Ham isn't goes back to verse 1 of Chapter 9, “So God blessed Noah and his sons.” At that time, I said that when God blessed Noah and his three sons, it was certainly a blessing in their physical

person and possibly even in a spiritual sense too. But that blessing doesn't necessarily transfer beyond them.

In other words, God had blessed Ham and therefore Noah couldn't curse him. As the Bible clearly says elsewhere –

“How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how shall I denounce *whom* the LORD has not denounced?”

Because Ham received God's blessing, it would be an act of defiance against God for Noah to turn and curse him. Instead he cursed Canaan. Ham was the youngest son of Noah and Canaan was the youngest son of Ham. And so in order to demonstrate justice in the matter and ensure he didn't curse the one God had blessed, he turned his curse towards Canaan.

This curse of Noah upon Canaan and the blessing of Shem and Japheth by Noah is the first explicit prophetic utterance by man of the entire Bible. What is left unstated is any blessing or curse at all on his son Ham. He neither confirms God's blessing upon him, nor does he call a curse on upon him.

Ham is the great ignored figure of the prophecy and to this date, the people groups who make up the sons of Ham around the world remain relatively outside of the main scope of the world's attention.

In the next chapter, we will see the divisions of these sons. The curse on the Canaanites will become more and more evident leading right up until the time of Israel inhabiting the Promised Land and the interaction of these people with Israel will be exactly as Noah has prophesied right here.

After the cursing of Canaan, Noah directs his first blessing to the second son – Shem. This is known as the doctrine of divine election. Abel was put ahead of Cain. When Abel was killed, Seth replaced him as the chosen and adopted son of God. Now, for the second time we see a second son placed above the first.

This pattern will continue and grow richly in the Bible and points directly to the work of Jesus Christ who replaces fallen Adam. The second replacing the first. When we get to the story of Abraham, we'll see him receive the blessing even though he was the second son of his father.

From Abraham came two notable sons, Ishmael and Isaac, but only one son is chosen to continue the selected line – Isaac. From Isaac, will come two notable sons, Esau and Jacob, but only Jacob will be chosen to continue the selected line.

From Jacob will come the 12 sons of Israel – all who will share in his blessing, but from one of them, Judah, the line will again be narrowed. Judah will have two notable sons – Zerah and Perez, but only one is chosen to continue the line – the second son Perez.

And so the Bible continues in this way. If we think about it, we can see that God places each of us in the exact place where He chooses to display His wisdom and knowledge and yet when He does this, He doesn't violate the free will of the people of the world. Thus He is both just and the justifier of all who demonstrate faith in Him.

In his blessing, Noah mentions Japheth, his firstborn. He says, "May God enlarge Japheth." In saying this, he makes a pun on his name. The name Japheth means to enlarge or to widely extend. Noah blesses the son with the very name he gave him.

In all, the prophecy mentions the servant-hood of Canaan 3 times and he is placed directly as a servant to both Shem and Japheth.

²⁸ And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. ²⁹ So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

Here we are, having arrived at the last verse of Chapter 9 and our last verse for today. Noah was 600 years old at the time of the flood and he lasted another 350 years after it. This means that Noah died in the year 2006 Anno Mundi.

Before we close things up today, I want to give a note of hope and assurance to you all. In the Bible, there are blessings and curses that fall on various people and, yes, these transfer through to the descendants of those people.

The problem many people have then is that if they are outside of the favored line, they may feel like they are still living under the curse of their fathers. However, through Jesus Christ, all are granted the same privileges and the same salvation. The account of Noah lists his sons in this order – Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

In the book of Acts, this is the same order in which salvation through Christ came to the people of the world. The sons of Shem include Israel, and they received Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2.

The sons of Ham came next when an Ethiopian eunuch received Christ and was baptized in chapter 8 of Acts. And finally, the sons of Japheth were represented in chapter 10 when Cornelius, an Italian, received Christ together with his family. In other words, God worked out a plan which would restore all of the people of the world, represented by these three men.

In Christ, every curse is lifted and every heart is made new. All who call on Him are elevated to the same level and none rises above another.

Paul explains this in the book of Galatians – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham was of the favored line of Noah's son Shem, but we are all included in the same spiritual blessing through Jesus Christ. No matter where you descend from and no matter what your past may have been like, in Jesus Christ there is a grand and glorious future for you as God's cherished and blessed child.

A Rainbow, a Vineyard, a Blessing and a Curse

God spoke to Noah and to his sons too
As for Me, behold I establish my covenant with you

And this covenant will continue on forever, it is true
I am also making it with your descendants after you

And even more, it is with every living creature that you see
With the birds, the cattle, and every beast with you
Of all the life that leaves the ark, the promise is from Me
This is my covenant and My words to you are true

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by such an inundation
Nor again shall there be a flood to destroy every living man
I make this covenant with you and make this proclamation
This promise to you is a part of my great unfolding plan

And this is the sign of the covenant between Me and you
And every living creature with you for all generations
I set my rainbow in the cloud, to remember that it's true
That your flood was the last of such watery devastations

It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the land
That the rainbow will be seen brightly in the cloud
And I will remember my covenant and my word, it shall stand
Never again will a destroying global flood be allowed

The rainbow shall be in the cloud to remind me of this day
I will look on it to remember my everlasting promise
Between God and every living creature I do convey
My word is true so I ask you to not be a doubting Thomas

Now the sons of Noah that were on the ark were three
Shem and Ham and Japheth, each had his given name
And Ham was the father of Canaan, cursed he would be
When Ham did something wrong, on Canaan fell the blame

Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard
Then he drank of the wine and lay drunk and uncovered in his tent
And Ham for his father's state, modesty he did not regard
And he talked to his brothers saying things with bad intent

But Shem and Japheth treated their father with respect
They covered Noah's nakedness in a caring way
They had their faces turned and his dignity they did protect
And their deeds are hailed as noble, even to this day

When Noah awoke from his wine, He knew what Ham had done
And so in repayment Noah cursed Ham's youngest son

Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be
He shall serve his brethren and they shall rule over him
Blessed be the Lord the God of Shem, yes blessed is He
And may Canaan be his servant, may his days be ever grim

And may God enlarge Japheth, and in Shem's tents may he dwell
And may Canaan be his servant, to serve Japheth as well

And Noah lived after the flood 350 years
So all the days of Noah were 950 and he died
He lived through great trials and certainly many tears
It can be said of Noah, his faith was perfectly applied

And we like Noah can also be called sons of God
When we call out to Jesus as our saving Lord
When we do, heavenly streets we will trod
Yes, simply by believing and taking God at His word

Hallelujah and Amen...

For next week, take time to read Genesis 10:1-5, The Table of Nations, Part 1, The Sons of Japheth