

Genesis 9:8-29

The Noahic Covenant and the Three Lines of Humanity

Genesis 9 8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, **9** “Now behold, I Myself do 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 comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. **11** I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” **12** God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; **13** I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. **14** It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will 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; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16** When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon 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.”

18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and 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.

20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. **21** He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. **22** 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 and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness. **24** When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

25 So he said,
“Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”

26 He also said,
“Blessed be the Lord,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

27 “May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

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

God's Covenant with Noah Genesis 9:8-17

The Establishment of the Covenant...9:8-11

I. The general establishment of God's covenant with this new world, and the extent of that covenant

“The covenant which was promised Gen. 6:18 before the Flood, here goes into effect. A covenant (*berîth*) is the most solemn and binding form of divine promise, given for man’s double assurance and because of man’s carnal weakness, but quite unnecessary when God’s part of the agreement is concerned.

Therefore, such covenants are not to be put on a parallel with human covenants in which two contracting parties meet on the same level and make mutual pledges. Divine covenants emanate from God...He makes them, He fixes the terms, and the conditions, He in sovereign freedom binds Himself.

Here the verb used for the setting up of the covenant does not signify strictly the entering upon a covenant, but... "to cause to stand," used like Lev. 26:9; Deut. 8:18, in the sense of "keeping" or "carrying out." For when Gen. 6:18 promised a covenant as future, this word reckons with the covenant as practically existent and concerns itself merely with "carrying into effect" its provisions.” H C Leupold, Genesis

“This covenant was made with mankind (you and your descendants after you), and even with the animals (every living creature that is with you). God promised He would never again destroy all with a flood or cover the earth with a flood. This was a repetition and clarification of the promise God made in Genesis 8:21-22.” David Guzik

Here observe...

1. That God is graciously pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant, wherein God greatly magnifies his condescending favour, and greatly encourages man's duty and obedience, as a reasonable and gainful service.
2. That all God's covenants with man are of his own making.

3. That God's covenants are established more firmly than the pillars of heaven or the foundations of the earth, and cannot be disannulled.
4. That God's covenants are made with the human counterparty and with their seed; the promise is to them and their children.

II. The particular intention of this covenant. It was designed to secure the world from another deluge: There shall not any more be a flood.

“A peculiar difficulty arises in v. 10 for those who hold that the Flood was partial and not universal. They must support the strange supposition that God made a covenant with those creatures only which went forth from the ark. Others that never entered the ark must do without the benefits of such a covenant.” H C Leupold

“I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed. God had made a covenant with Noah (6:18). This is now extended to Noah’s descendants. The promise not to destroy the world again with another flood is repeated (8:22; 9:11). The postflood cosmos will be kept in a regular and predictable cycle of seasons and will end by fire (2 Peter 3:7).” Michael Barrett, RHB Study Bible

God had drowned the world once, and still it was as filthy and provoking as ever. God foresaw the wickedness of it, and yet promised he would never drown it any more; for he deals not with us according to our sins. It is owing to God's goodness and faithfulness, not to any reformation of the world, that it has not often been deluged and that it is not deluged now.

As the old world was ruined to be a monument of justice, so this world remains to this day, a monument of mercy, according to the oath of God, that the waters of Noah should no more return to cover the earth

Isaiah 54 9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me,
When I swore that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you
Nor will I rebuke you.

It shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth:
Every time we see a rainbow, we should remember the faithfulness of God
and every one of His promises. David Guzik

The Seal of the Covenant...9:12-17

The seal of this covenant of nature was natural enough; it was the rainbow, which, it is likely, was seen in the clouds before...but was never a seal of the covenant till now that it was made so by a divine institution. (Matthew Henry takes the position that the rainbow preceded the Covenant. But other commentators differ on this eg Leupold)

“The preponderance of evidence points to the fact that the rainbow in the clouds now first came into being.

How much more effective would be a sign that appears for the first time, especially so solemn and awe-inspiring a sign as the rainbow with its ethereal beauty and vast span! There would, furthermore, be a splendid propriety to have a promise, which brings into being a relationship which did not exist before, attested by a sign which did not exist before. As the sign by its newness is a token of God’s vast power, so the covenant, though promising a new situation, will be effective by the same vast power. It might be that the same physical laws prevailed on earth prior to this time, so that light falling on a spray of water against a dark background produced a miniature rainbow. But the text says: "My bow do I give in the clouds" . It is not impossible that with the Flood came altered atmospheric and cloud conditions, for geologic evidence points to an earlier age when a climate uniformly tropical prevailed also in the arctic region.”

Delitzsch has perhaps interpreted the deeper propriety of the various elements involved more adequately than any other interpreter. He writes: "As it (the rainbow) shines forth against a dark background which but shortly before flashed with lightnings, it symbolizes the victory of bright, gentle love over the darkly luminous wrath; growing as it does out of the interaction of sun and dark clouds, it symbolizes the readiness of the heavenly to interpenetrate the earthly; extending from heaven to earth, it proclaims peace between God and man; reaching, as it does, beyond the range of vision, it declares that God’s covenant of grace is all-embracing.”
H C Leupold, Genesis

Note on “God looks and remembers”...Genesis 9:14-16

14 It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will 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; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16** When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

“God’s remembering is not to be thought of as over against the possibility of forgetting, as would be the case with man; but rather as a divine activity whereby His "covenant terms" will be vividly before Him, and man may take joy from the fact that God thus thinks upon what He promised.”

The rainbow appears when the clouds are most disposed to rain, and returns after the rain; when we have most reason to fear the rain prevailing, then God shows this seal of the promise that it shall not prevail. Thus God obviates our fears with such encouragements as are both suitable and seasonable.

The Sin of Ham Genesis 9:18-24

Leupold comments...”The episode that follows serves only as an occasion for the patriarchal prediction that follows”

Noah's family and employment...9:18-20

The names of his sons are again mentioned (v. 18, 19) as those from whom the whole earth was overspread, by which it appears that Noah, after the flood, had no more children: all the world came from these three.

Genesis 9¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and 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.

Since now the sons of Noah are going to be dealt with, especially in chapter ten, as the founders of the three great branches of the human family, they are formally mentioned, and their going forth from the ark is connected with their names, inasmuch as their going forth was really epoch-making and an actual new departure made by these notable three branches. There can hardly be any doubt about it that these are mentioned in the order of their age, Shem being the oldest.

We have advanced quite a time from the Flood; at least, Noah’s son Ham already has children, and even his youngest Canaan (see Gen. 10:6) is born already. Several decades may well have passed. Men have begun to rehabilitate themselves. Noah apparently took to agriculture at once,

Genesis 9²⁰ Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.

Some time after his departure out of the ark, he returned to his old employment, from which he had been diverted by the building of the ark first, and probably afterwards by the building of a house on dry land for himself and family.

Noah's sin and shame...9:21

Genesis 9²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

He planted a vineyard; and, when he had gathered his vintage, probably he appointed a day of mirth and feasting in his family, and had his sons and their children with him, to rejoice with him in the increase of his house as well as in the increase of his vineyard;

“The having of grapes led to the making of wine. The having of wine leads to the drinking of it. In all this, taken by itself, there is no wrong. We have every reason to believe, however, that Noah was not ignorant of the potency of the drink he had prepared. But he neglected caution.

He who maintained his ground over against a wicked and godless world, neglecting watchfulness and prayer in a time of comparative safety, fell prey to a comparatively simple temptation, which should have been easy to meet. It is not the young and untried Noah who sins. It is the seasoned man of God, ripe in experience, who is here brought low. The sober tone of the detailed narrative points strongly to Noah's guilt. Noah drinks to excess and actually "becomes drunk". The heat of wine leads the aged patriarch involuntarily to thrust back his garment, wherewith he had been covered or had from force of habit covered himself as he lay down in his tent.” H C Leupold, Genesis

It was his sin, and a great sin, so much the worse for its being so soon after a great deliverance; we have this account to teach us...

1. That the fairest man since the Fall had his weaknesses and faults. It was said of Noah that he was perfect in his generations (ch. 6 9), but this shows that it is meant of sincerity, not a sinless perfection.

2. That sometimes those who, with watchfulness and resolution, have, by the grace of God, kept their integrity in the midst of temptation, have, through security, and carelessness, and neglect of the grace of God, been surprised into sin, when the hour of temptation has been over. Noah, who had kept sober in drunken company, is now drunk in sober company. Let him that thinks he stands take heed.

Now the consequence of Noah's sin was shame. He was uncovered within his tent, made naked to his shame, as Adam when he had eaten forbidden fruit. Yet Adam sought concealment; Noah is so destitute of thought and reason that he seeks no covering. This was a fruit of the vine that Noah did not think of.

Observe here the great evil of the sin of drunkenness. (1.) It reveals men. What infirmities they have, they betray when they are drunk, and what secrets they are entrusted with are then easily got out of them. (2.) It disgraces men, and exposes them to contempt. As it shows them, so it shames them. Men say and do that when drunk which when they are sober they would blush at the thoughts of, Hab 2 15, 16.

Ham's impudence and impiety...9:22

Genesis 9²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

“For the right understanding of what follows we are again reminded, as in v. 18, that Ham is the father of Canaan.

The event does most assuredly show how soon the salutary warnings conveyed by the Flood were forgotten, and mankind began to incline toward a downward course.” H C Leupold

He saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren, v. 22.
To see it accidentally and involuntarily would not have been a crime; but...

1. He pleased himself with the sight...*He saw*”

“Literally, the ancient Hebrew says that Ham “told with delight” what he saw in his father’s tent. He determined to mock his father and was undermining his authority as a man of God.” David Guzik

“As far as Ham himself is concerned, the expression is not a mere harmless and accidental "and he saw," but "he looked at" or "he gazed with satisfaction." What ordinary filial reverence should have restrained is given free rein. The unclean imagination feeds itself by gazing.

But at the same time a measure of departure from the faith is also revealed by Ham. That the son should have treated with such levity a father eminent for true piety, the one man whom God spared in the destruction of the world, indicates that this son no longer esteemed such true godliness as he ought to have done.” H C Leupold, Genesis

Perhaps Ham had sometimes been himself drunk, and reproved for it by his good father, whom he was therefore pleased to see thus overcome. Note, It is common for those who walk in false ways

themselves to rejoice at the false steps which they sometimes see others make. But charity rejoices not in iniquity, nor can true penitents that are sorry for their own sins rejoice in the sins of others.

2. He told his two brethren without (in the street, as the word is), in a scornful deriding manner, that his father might seem vile unto them... "He told"

The circumstances suggest that it means: "and he told with delight."
H C Leupold, Genesis

It is very wrong, (1.) To make a jest of sin (Prov 14 9), and to be puffed up with that for which we should rather mourn, 1 Cor 5 2. And, (2.) To publish the faults of any, especially of parents, whom it is our duty to honour.

Noah was not only a good man, but had been a good father to him; and this was a most base disingenuous requital to him for his tenderness. Ham is here called the father of Canaan, which intimates that he who was himself a father should have been more respectful to him that was his father.

The pious care of Shem and Japheth to cover their poor father's shame...9:23

Genesis 9 ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

"The conduct of these two brethren stands forth in strong contrast to that of Ham. They were men of pure mind and wholly given to the religion of their father. They are truly grieved at what befell their father—not amused. They seek promptly to veil their father's weakness with the mantle of charity. They promptly take "the robe", the robe that was pushed back and so had very likely fallen off his couch to the ground.

This robe they take upon the shoulders of them both, and then, "walking backward they covered the nakedness of their father." To all this, practically clear enough in itself, is added the very explicit statement that "their faces were turned backward, so as not to see their father's nakedness." This was all, no doubt, done before Ham's eyes. No words are recorded as having been spoken by these two, apparently for the reason that none were spoken. The excess of restraint thus self-imposed spoke quite loudly for itself. If Ham could feel a rebuke, he would feel it

sufficiently if no words were spoken, in fact, the finer tact of the two brothers discerns that a spoken rebuke often rouses opposition. So with silent sorrow they go about their task.” H C Leupold, Genesis

They not only would not see it themselves, but provided that no one else might see it, herein setting us an example of charity with reference to other men's sin and shame; we must not only not say, A confederacy, with those that proclaim it, but we must be careful to conceal it, or at least to make the best of it, so doing as we would be done by. 1. There is a mantle of love to be thrown over the faults of all, 1 Pet 4 8. 2. Besides this, there is a robe of reverence to be thrown over the faults of parents and other superiors.

Noah's Prophecy Genesis 9:25-29

I. **Noah comes to himself:** He *awoke from his wine*. Sleep cured him, and, we may suppose, so cured him that he never relapsed into that sin afterwards.

Genesis 9 ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

II. **The spirit of prophecy comes upon him**, and, like dying Jacob, he tells his sons what shall befall them

Genesis 9 ²⁵ So he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;

A servant of servants

He shall be to his brothers.”

²⁶ He also said,

“Blessed be the Lord,

The God of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ “May God enlarge Japheth,

And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant.”

“Noah saw prophetically what would happen to his three sons, from whom the whole human race would develop. Cursed be Canaan. Canaan was the father of the Canaanites who later would be driven out by Joshua and enslaved (servant of servants) by Israel and other nations. As in ch. 3, a blessing accompanies the curse. God would enlarge Japheth. God would make a covenant with the descendants of Shem (God of Shem) and dwell in the tents of Shem (an anticipation of tabernacle, temple, and incarnation of the Son of God).” David Guzik

He pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham (v. 25), in whom Ham is himself cursed, either because this son of his was now more guilty than the rest, or because the posterity of this son was afterwards to be rooted out of their land, to make room for Israel. though the Canaanites were a formidable people, yet they were of old an accursed people, and doomed to ruin. The particular curse is, A servant of servants (that is, the meanest and most despicable servant) shall he be, even to his brethren. Those who by birth were his equals shall by conquest be his lords. This certainly points at the victories obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were all either put to the sword or put under tribute (Josh 9 23; Judg 1 28, 30, 33, 35), which happened not till about 800 years after this.

“Now the descendants of Canaan, according to Gen. 10:15-20, are the peoples that afterward dwelt in Phoenicia and in the so-called land of Canaan, Palestine.

That they became races accursed in their moral impurity is apparent from passages such as Gen. 15:16; 19:5; Lev. 18 and 20; Deut. 12:31. In Abraham’s day the measure of their iniquity was already almost full. By the time of the entrance of Israel into Canaan under Joshua the Canaanites, collectively also called Amorites, were ripe for divine judgment through Israel, His scourge. Sodom left its name for the unnatural vice its inhabitants practiced. The Phoenicians and the colony of Carthage surprised the Romans by the depth of their depravity. Verily cursed was Canaan!” H C Leupold, Genesis

Though divine curses operate slowly, yet, first or last, they will take effect. The Canaanites were under a curse of slavery, and yet, for a great while, had the dominion; for a family, a people, a person, may lie under the curse of God, and yet may long prosper in the world, till the measure of their iniquity, like that of the Canaanites, be full. Many are marked for ruin that are not yet ripe for ruin. Therefore, Let not thy heart envy sinners.

He pronounces a blessing upon Shem and Japheth.

He blesses Shem, or rather blesses God for him, yet so that it entitles him to the greatest honour and happiness imaginable, v. 26.

Observe,...[1.] He calls the Lord the god of Shem; and happy, thrice happy, is that people whose God is the Lord,
Ps 144 15.

Shem is sufficiently recompensed for his respect to his father by this, that the Lord himself puts this honour upon him, to be his God, which is a sufficient recompence for all our services and all our sufferings for his name.

He gives to God the glory of that good work which Shem had done, and, instead of blessing and praising him that was the instrument, he blesses and praises God that was the author.

He foresees and foretells that God's gracious dealings with Shem and his family would be such as would evidence to all the world that he was the God of Shem, on which behalf thanksgivings would by many be rendered to him: Blessed be the Lord God of Shem.

Some think reference is here had to Christ, who was the Lord God that, in his human nature, should descend from the loins of Shem; for of him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

He blesses Japheth, and, in him, the isles of the Gentiles, which were peopled by his seed: God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, v. 27.

“God is the God of Shem and the descendants of Japheth would find God “in the tents of Shem.” Israel was chosen by God to be a “light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6; 49:6), for “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). Sad to say, for the most part, the nation of Israel failed to witness to the Gentiles that they might believe in the true and living God (Isa. 52:5; Rom. 2:24).” Warren Wiersbe, Genesis

The End of Noah's Years...9:28.29

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

“With an appropriate summary, cast after the pattern of chapter five, the total age of Noah is recorded, so that we are enabled to compare his age with the rest of the antediluvian patriarchs. To our surprise we find that he lived twenty years more than Adam. On the other hand, a bit of computation based on chapter eleven will reveal that thus Noah lived quite far into the life of Abraham. So the "history of Noah," which began with 6:9, appropriately closes with the length of Noah's life and with his death.”
H C Leupold

Here see, 1. How God prolonged the life of Noah; he lived 950 years, twenty more than Adam and but nineteen less than Methuselah: this long life was a further reward of his signal piety, and a great blessing to the world, to which no doubt he continued a preacher of righteousness, with this advantage, that now all he preached to were his own children.

2. How God put a period to his life at last. Though he lived long, yet he died, having probably first seen many that descended from him dead before him. Noah lived to see two worlds, but, being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died he went to see a better than either.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 9

Thank God for the rainbow promise that God will never again flood the world. These are days of grace where God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). The covenant with Noah guards the first gospel promise of the Redeemer coming into the human race (Gen. 3:15). The flood destroyed humanity except for Noah’s family, and it seemed like the promise was in jeopardy. But God assured the continuation of the human race. Not even the judgment of sin will frustrate God’s redemptive purpose in Christ.

Beware of the danger of drunkenness. We personally need to be very careful with strong drink. It is a stumbling block to many. Alcoholic drink is not wrong per se, but the Bible does clearly teach that drunkenness is a sin. It shows that drunkenness makes one unaware of what is happening. We must not misuse our bodies. Drunkenness is often linked to immorality and unseemly behavior. Therefore, respect the civil laws limiting alcohol consumption, and guard yourself against ever becoming intoxicated.

Joel Beeke