

## Curse and Blessing 12-3-06

Genesis 9:18-29 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) <sup>19</sup> These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. <sup>20</sup> Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness. <sup>24</sup> When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup> he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." <sup>26</sup> He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. <sup>27</sup> May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." <sup>28</sup> After the flood Noah lived 350 years. <sup>29</sup> Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died.

We have come to the end of the account of Noah. 75% of the people groups on the earth have a flood story. Remember that this narrative began after the ten generations of man. We saw the lines of Cain and Seth. We saw Cain's lineage turn from God while Seth's called on the name of the Lord. (Genesis 4:26) From Seth's line came the godly men Enoch and Noah. In spite of their message to the world, man was so totally corrupt that only the flood could end the violence and pain that were the by-products of sin. (Genesis 6:5)

After the flood, God entered a covenant with mankind. He did so in full awareness that man's heart was not changed by the flood. Even as God entered into His promise He reminds us of man that, "every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood." Genesis 8:21 (NIV) Noah's sacrifice of some of all the clean animals pleased God. The End

We would end it there, but Moses goes on to tell us the whole story. Our passage today is another bridge passage that takes us from the account of Noah and the flood to the account of the next ten generations. It is a backdrop for what is to follow in the book of Exodus. It isn't a pretty picture, but it is a real picture. What we really need are not fairy tales but true stories that tell us the truth about human nature.

<sup>18</sup> The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) <sup>19</sup> These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. Noah's sons will become the fathers of all the people groups in the world. We were introduced to these sons at the end of the ten genealogies and when they went into the ark. (Genesis 5:32) The next account of the generations is their story, the story of their descendants. The author makes special mention of only one son, Canaan. He will point him out again in the next ten generations because "the land of Canaan" will be mentioned 35x in the patriarchal accounts.

**Commented [notes1]:** 26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.  
Gen 4:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.  
Gen 6:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 32 After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.  
Gen 5:32 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. Remember that Noah was called a righteous man, blameless among the people of his generation. (Genesis 6:9) He walked with God. We really didn't know what his occupation was until this point in the text. Here we find he was a farmer. He grew grapes and perhaps other crops. The reason grapes were such an important crop was that they could easily be stored as raisins and as wine. It doesn't take isolation as a monk to walk with God. Noah was a farmer who walked with God. God wants to walk with people of every occupation.

**Commented [notes4]:** 9 This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Gen 6:9 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. When Noah's first batch of wine was ready, he tested it, and tested it, and tested it, until he became passed out drunk. What happened to the righteous, blameless man who did everything that God told him? Well, if you were locked up with your extended family and a bunch of animals for a year you might... No, no excuses. This had to be many years later. He now has grandsons and it takes years for grapevines to produce.

A little wine is good for your health. The Bible does not forbid the drinking of wine. It does warn us to drink in moderation. (Proverbs 23:20) Personally, I decided years ago to join Jesus in not drinking of the fruit of the vine until the Great Wedding Feast. (Matthew 26:29) That is not to say everyone should. It is just something I personally felt led to do.

**Commented [notes5]:** 20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, Prov 23:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Matt 26:29 (NIV)

Alcohol lowers your inhibitions. One drink or two is relaxing. A few more and you don't know when to stop. (Proverbs 20:1) That puts you in precarious situations as was the case with Noah. Noah's excessive alcohol consumption was a sin. It is the only sin that was recorded in the story of Noah. Don't you wish that could be said of you when your story is written?

**Commented [notes7]:** 1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. Prov 20:1 (NIV)

I have tried to help a number of alcoholics break free from the slavery that alcohol can become. It's a tough battle. For those with alcoholic tendencies, one drink is a sin, because they know where it will end, or maybe I should say because they have no idea where they will end up. We have delivered alcoholics in our congregation. You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32) Amen? Jesus can deliver us from whatever threatens to enslave us. (Romans 6:16)

**Commented [notes8]:** 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32 (NIV)

There is a warning here for us as we age. We find that some things don't tempt us like they once did and we may let our guard down. It is easy to rely on past victories and not be desperate for God's gracious leading today. We let down our guard thinking that we are strong enough to take a little temptation, and before you know it, our testimony is flawed. The middle age crisis is real, but so is the old age crisis. How many people can you recall that had a great testimony until... They let their guard down and found out how weak they really are. They tasted sin they so long avoided and it scarred them and their family and those they ministered to. You can let your guard down when you get to heaven, not before. (1 Corinthians 1:8)

**Commented [notes9]:** 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? Romans 6:16 (NIV)

Noah had too much to drink. He lay naked in his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. Ham, notice he is again called the father of Canaan, apparently gazed on the nakedness of his father. We say,

**Commented [notes10]:** 8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 1:8 (NIV)

"What's the big deal." In the Middle East, this was a very disrespectful thing. They had much more of a sense of modesty than the western world today. Remember the shame that Adam and Eve felt when they realized they were naked? (Genesis 3:7) There was something evil in what Ham did. The prophet Habakkuk gives us some Hebrew insight into this story. <sup>15</sup> *"Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies.* Habakkuk 2:15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.  
Gen 3:7 (NIV)

Notice in verse 24 Noah found out what was done to him. Some believe that Ham stared at Noah's naked body; others believe that he committed some kind of lewd act because of the words "done to him". The author of Genesis does not shy away from telling the sordid details, so why would he in this passage? Whichever the case, Noah's drunkenness had given Ham an opportunity to sin against his father. Drunkenness often gives others an opportunity to sin against God and us. In the attempt to find satisfaction outside of God, we enter into excess, and in doing so we can give others the opportunity to sin as well.

The focus of the story is not Noah's sin, but we can learn from it that even the best of leaders fail. A person that walks with God may not do so consistently. We feel a great disappointment when leaders that we respect are caught in sin. It is a poor testimony for the cause of Christ. Yet, leaders are people just like us, sinners forgiven by the grace of God. Some denominations have a restoration process. Others site the requirements of an elder needing to have a good reputation. (Titus 1:6,7) They would say that a publicly disgraceful fall eliminates them from a leadership role. That's a tough stand. I think the Bible is so strict on this issue because of human tendency to have charismatic leaders that do not have a genuine relationship with Christ. We can be duped by people that just love the position and notoriety. A popular minister that does not have a heart continually filled with Christ will eventually succumb to temptation. We should love fallen leaders and help them in the process of repentance and restoration into fellowship.

**Commented [notes12]:** 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.  
7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.  
Titus 1:6-7 (NIV)

The point of the story, however, is the curse and blessing on the brothers. Remember, as Moses was writing this the Israelites were about to go into the land of Canaan. The enemy they were to face would be the descendents of Ham. His descendents followed his tendencies and were a vile people with detestable practices. Leviticus 18 describes them using the term "nakedness" twenty-four times. They practiced religions that involved public sexual acts. The curse was not just propaganda to make them believe God was on their side. It was a warning that we reap what we sow in our heirs. (Exodus 34:7)

**Commented [notes13]:** 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."  
Ex 34:7 (NIV)

It sounds as if Ham was inviting his brothers to do whatever it was that he had done. Sin loves company. <sup>23</sup> *But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.* Shem and Japheth did what Ham should have done. They respectfully covered up their father. We have another parallel word with the Garden story in the word "saw". Eve saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was desirable for food. (Genesis 3:6) Ham saw his father's nakedness, but Shem and Japheth were careful to "not see".

**Commented [notes14]:** 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.  
Gen 3:6 (NIV)

Adam, Cain, and Noah all share a common thread. All were tillers of the ground. The fall of all three was related to fruit. Knowledge is a common theme, and each story ends with a curse. Though Noah and his sons had entered a cleansed earth, the heart of man remained the same. If the world was ever to be free of sin, the heart of man had to change. (Ezekiel 36:26)

As a parallel to the Garden story, Ham can be seen in the role of the Serpent. What he does results in nakedness being exposed. Then it is the other brothers who imitate God's role as those who provide covering for the nakedness. (Genesis 3:21)

<sup>24</sup> When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup> he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." This curse and the following blessing are the only words we have from Noah. They are in poetic form and are a kind of last will and testament. Not only had Ham taken a good look at his naked father, but he invited his brothers to do the same. It was the opposite of honoring one's father and mother. (Exodus 20:12) The ancient world punished a stubborn rebellious son with death. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) It was seen as subverting natural authority and ultimately mocking the authority of Sovereign God. The word "slave" will be repeated three times in Noah's invocation.

But why was the curse on Canaan, Ham's youngest son instead of Ham who committed the act? Ham was Noah's youngest son. It seems this curse was a prayer to God predicting the future of the nations that would come from these brothers. As Noah was one who walked with God, in spite of his indiscretion, God honored his request. Or we could say that because Noah walked with God, he prayed what he saw to be the revealed will of God in regards to the future of his sons. (1John 5:14) Some commentators believe that Noah saw the spirit of Ham in Canaan.

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. Just as we were surprised to find Canaan cursed instead of Ham, here we are as surprised to see it is YHWH, the covenant God of Shem that is blessed instead of Shem. As we shall soon see, the line of Shem is the line from which Abraham is born and eventually the Messiah. If we were searching for clues as to which of the three would be the line to bring forth the promised seed of the woman, this would our key passage. (Genesis 3:15)

Because of the direction the descendants of these three sons migrate, some have concluded that these are races and the blessings and curses fall on the different races. They are all the sons of Noah in the image of God. Everyone is accountable for his or her own actions. (Ezekiel 18:20) The fulfillment of the curse and blessing will be seen in the land of Canaan. But the Israelites are warned that if they take up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, they too will be removed from the land. The Scriptures are clear in declaring that God is not biased. (Ephesians 6:9) In Christ, race or nationality make no difference. (Colossians 3:11)

<sup>27</sup> May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." Most of us are descended from the Japheth line. At no

**Commented [notes15]:** 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezek 36:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Gen 3:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. Ex 20:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, 19 his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. 20 They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard." 21 Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid. Deut 21:18-21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 1 John 5:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Gen 3:15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 20 The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. Ezek 18:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Eph 6:9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Col 3:11 (NIV)

time in history has the Japheth line especially been a guest of the Shem lineage. But we could take this as the Gentile being grafted into the Jewish trunk and roots as we become believers in the Jewish Messiah. (Isaiah 66:19-20) In fact, a day will come when the descendents of Ham will be reconciled to Shem's descendents, Israel. (Isaiah 19:23-25)

<sup>28</sup> After the flood Noah lived 350 years. <sup>29</sup> Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died. Noah was the last of the very long-lived patriarchs. The ages of man will now rapidly decline. This section of Genesis concludes by tying it with the previous section. If you recall the ten genealogies, you will remember that each ended with "and he died", with the exception of Enoch. Now the death bell tolls for Noah the tenth from Adam.

We can draw a number of lessons from our passage for today. First, we never grow too old to be tempted or to stumble. Keep your guard up until you are in your eternal home. It was faith in the grace of God that caused the Lord to call Noah righteous, not his perfect life. Letting our guard down later in life can be just as destructive as when we are young.

Finally we can see a respect for God ordained order that is sorely lacking in our world today, respect for parents, for elders, and for governmental authority. We have forgotten that God is sovereign over all things and places people in their positions at His bidding. (Daniel 2:20,21) Respecting them is respecting the Lord and His order. To act with a lack of respect, to mock or make light of those whom God has placed over us, is dishonoring to them and to God. (Romans 13:1,2) Our attitude toward these things carries on in our children who watch our words and behavior. Are we bringing blessing upon our descendents or a curse? The Bible warns us again and again that the way we live will affect our children and the generations that follow. (Exodus 20:5,6)

We should always keep in mind where it is all leading. From the line of Shem would come Abraham who, being justified by faith, would continue a covenant relationship with God. (Romans 4:13) Ultimately, from that line would come Jesus, (Matthew 1:1) who brought us the New Covenant that would change the heart of man. What the flood could not do, faith in the Messiah can! The inclination of the heart from youth toward evil can be turned around by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup> It is a journey over millennia to get to the full revelation what God was doing, but along the way we have these invaluable lessons.

1. a footnote on the evil heart of man: The postmodern world is having a hard time grasping the concept that mankind is evil. Regardless of what your definition is, the Bible's definition of evil is anything short of God's perfection. If one does not love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, they are evil. Why? Because that is what is right. This is our Creator's command. That we don't like it proves His point. The Scriptures declare that there is not one righteous person that doesn't sin.

**Commented [notes24]:** 19 "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations--to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations.

20 And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD--on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels.  
Isaiah 66:19-20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.

24 In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth.

25 The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."  
Isaiah 19:23-25 (NIV)

**Commented [notes26]:** 20 and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.

21 He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.  
Dan 2:20-21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.  
Romans 13:1-2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes28]:** 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

6 but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.  
Ex 20:5-6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes29]:** 13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.  
Romans 4:13 (NIV)

**Commented [notes30]:** 1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:  
Matt 1:1 (NIV)