



THE CURSE OF CANAAN

Genesis 9:18-29

While the earth had been cleansed by the great flood, it soon became evident that sin had not been eradicated from the human heart. Both godly Noah and his son Ham demonstrate that truth and remind us to always be prepared for the temptations that are sure to come.

One of the greatest proofs that the Bible is inspired by God is that it doesn't cover up the failures of key figures.

In Genesis 9 Noah and his family have disembarked from that great ark, following the flood. The animals that had miraculously arrived at the ark a year earlier in pairs are now going to be miraculously guided by their Creator to the perfect habitats suitable for their well-being.

Now this would be a great a place to put a period on the biography of Noah. But God inspires Moses to keep on writing, and sadly we read this, beginning in verse 20:

Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and

Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father.

(verses 20-23)

Noah gets drunk from his homemade wine, and he staggers around naked before passing out. His son Ham witnesses this and goes and tells his two brothers, Shem and Japheth.

The Hebrew word for “told” indicates Ham tells his brothers with delight. Ham is loving the public



Painting from the tomb of Nakht depicting the gathering of grapes for wine.



humiliation of his father. And this tells you just as much about Noah's lapse in judgment as it does his son's spiritual condition. What will be proven true over time is that Ham is mocking his father, and in doing so, he knows full well he's effectively mocking his father's God.

Now some people try to claim that Ham molested his father; others suggest that seeing his father's nakedness is a euphemism for committing incest with his mother while his father was drunk. Well, that might make for a sensational story, but Ham doesn't have a sexual problem; he has a spiritual problem.

Let's look at Noah's response:

When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." (verses 24-25)

Remember, Noah is the patriarch and high priest of this family. So, when Noah learns that Ham has openly mocked him, he knows this, in reality, is deeper than mockery. This is spiritual apostasy.

And Noah delivers a prophecy in the form of a curse on Ham's son, Canaan. He says in verse 25 that Canaan and his descendants will be servants to his brothers and their descendants in the future.

Now this curse has been taken out of context by many people over the centuries to claim that people of African descent were cursed by God with slavery.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. All you have to do is read the verse; it says, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

This curse isn't on Ham; it's on Ham's son, Canaan. And the African nations didn't descend from Canaan; they descended from another son of Ham named Cush; it's from Cush that the dark-skinned Africans descended.

Noah isn't cursing Ham or his son Cush; Noah is

prophesying the future of *Canaan's* descendants—the Canaanites.

And if you keep reading your Bible, you'll discover over in Genesis 11 that Noah's firstborn son, Shem, will become the forefather of the Hebrew people.

So, what we find here in Noah's curse on Canaan is an amazing prophecy. Centuries later, after God delivers the Hebrew nation from Egypt and eventually leads them into the promised land, who's waiting there to fight them? It's the descendants of Canaan; and they've created all kinds of Canaanite clans and kingdoms known as the Ammorites and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Girgashites and a bunch of other mosquito bites.

They're waiting to suck the blood out of the Hebrew people, as it were, and wipe them off the face of the earth.

Now follow this: The Canaanites are going to try to get rid of the Hebrew people, the descendants of Shem. Why? Because Satan, the power behind these wicked people, knows that it is through the line of Shem that the Messiah will one day come.

The Bible reveals to us that there is only one race—the human race.

So, who wins? Again, the Bible tells us that when the tribes of Israel come into the land of Canaan, they eventually conquer the Canaanites, and Noah's prophecy comes to pass. The defeated Canaanites become forced laborers to the nation of Israel for many years.

Now in chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis, we're given the family trees of Noah's three sons. Remember, after the flood, this is all there is. This *is* the human race—Noah, along with his wife, and his three sons, with their wives.



And listed there are seventy sons and grandsons that descended from Noah's three sons. And from those listed, all the people groups and all the nations on Planet Earth have descended.

Now, I want to make this important point here. It's a point the apostle Paul makes very clearly as he preaches in Athens, as recorded in Acts 17. Paul says:

And [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. (verse 26)

God made every nation from one man—Adam. We all descended from Adam, down through Noah, down through his three sons. We all have come from the same family tree.

So, where did the different nations come from? In our next study, we'll explore the great migration of mankind following the Tower of Babel.

But for now, God planned for the development of diverse nations, with all their distinctive features and languages. You won't hear this in school or read it in the newspaper—and, frankly, many Christians miss the point too. But according to what we find here in the book of Genesis, which presents the family tree of mankind, there may be different nationalities and different ethnic groups and different languages and different physical features, and different skin colors, but it is incorrect to refer to different *races*.

There's not a white race and a black race and an Asian race and a Hispanic race; the Bible reveals to us that there is only one race—the human race. We all descended from the same family, and that means we are all related.

God creatively built into the gene pool of the *human race* the genetic potential for all kinds of variety, all kinds of physical distinctions that became predominant as people groups gathered around a language, as we'll see later in Genesis 11.

The amount of melanin in your skin gives your skin its color. And this level is determined by what dominates within your particular people group. Today we have ethnicities and even nations known for producing light-skinned people, dark-skinned people; brown-tinted people; red-tinted, yellow-tinted, and everything in between.

There are physical features that developed among ethnic groups, like round eyelids or slanted eyelids; some are tall, and others are short; some have dark hair, and others have light hair—and some of us are just praying for *hair*.

Beloved, if you believe you're superior to someone else because of your nationality or skin color, it isn't so much that you don't understand humanity; you don't understand God!

According to God's Word, *every* human being is actually related, having descended from the same family. We're all members of one race—the human race.

Let me tell you, racial prejudice comes from a sinful heart of pride that considers oneself better than somebody else.

But here's the good news: Jesus can change hearts. The cross of Christ is color-blind. Oh, this is the truth of our Creator, who made us, and the gospel of His Son, who saves us.

What specific steps can you take to avoid anything that might bring shame upon you and the Lord you represent?

Why is it important to acknowledge that all humanity has a common origin? Do you live consistently with that truth? If not, why not?

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