

Coastal Teaching Notes: Genesis 9:18-32 (June 22, 2025)

Noah's Folly and the Table of Nations

Intro: This is the account of what happened to Noah post flood. It has been quite a ride. His story is known as the second cycle because it has similar patterns from Adam to Lamech. Let's ponder some of the similarities. God's wind (ruach) brought forth the new creation. Dry ground appeared. Order was restored from chaos. Noah and his wife became the new Adam and Eve. Noah and his family are told to be fruitful and multiply. All the ideal of Eden.

Noah shows his appreciation by giving God a burnt offering, a total sacrifice. God responds with the Covenant of Noah, resting his bow on the clouds as a promise, never again to send a flood to destroy the land and all who dwell there again. All that is missing is the phrase, "And they lived happily ever after."

You see, unlike what many people feel, the Hebrew Bible is not a fairy tale. There are ups and more downs. You will see this pattern today as we follow this story.

However, I want to warn you that this chapter does not follow what you would expect. An very disturbing event will take place with one of Noah's sons. In the end, we are reminded of the main reason why God gave the Noahic Covenant, that being He has come to terms with the reality that the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21)

1. The Sons of Noah

18 Now the 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 (scattered).

- a. **These first two verses are setting up what will be known as the Table of Nations.** Shem, Ham, and Japheth represent "stock seeds" that will begin the birth of the nations that, even some we know of today. They will populate the earth. Things will come to a cross roads when we reach chapter eleven, which takes us to the Tower of Babel event, where there will be another scattering and the development of foreign languages.
 - **The list of Noah's sons is most likely not the actual birth order;** but rather has to do with prominence in Israel's storied history. We know for certain that Ham was the youngest son (Genesis 9:24), and there is some translations (NIV, KJC, NKJV) that list Japheth as the oldest son. The Hebrew is ambiguous in Genesis 10:21 and could go either way with regards to age when it comes to Shem and Japheth.
 - **Shem is listed first because he will be an ancestor of Abraham,** who will represent the God's chose people, the nation of Israel. Ham is listed second because the territory of Canaan plays a large role in Israel's storied history. Japheth is linked to the Indio - European peoples.
- b. **Ham is initially described as the father of Ham,** seemingly as soon as he comes off the ark, even though at this point he has no children. This will be how Ham described from here on out. "Ham the father of Canaan." We find out why he has this distinction in this chapter. Ham's future son, Canaan serves as a foreshadow the enemies of Israe, the Canaanites.

2. Noah's Folly

20 **Then Noah** began farming
and planted a vineyard.

21 **He drank of the wine and became drunk**
and uncovered himself inside his tent.

- a. **Noah was a worker of the ground.** The first thing he does is start a garden by planting a vineyard. Instantly, we can see some parallels with Adam. Adam was to work in the garden and was not partake of a fruit on the forbidden tree. Noah's fruit of *good and evil* were the grapes in the vineyard.
- b. **Verse 21 is a fast forward moment** because we are told that vineyard is now prime for making wine from the fruit. However, this garden folly led to his fall because he became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent. The theme of nakedness will now enter the picture and take center stage.
- c. **Was Noah wrong to plant a vineyard or drink wine**, which by the way, was fermented? No Welsh grape juice here! The issue in Scripture is never alcohol itself, but drunkenness, which entails a lack of self-control. His drunkenness was what led him to uncover himself in the middle of the tent. In doing so, he put himself in a vulnerable position, one that is the cornerstone to understanding the future blessings and curses of Noah.
- d. **How could Noah get drunk?**
 - He was the only one on the planet that was described as being blameless and righteous before God at the time (Genesis 7:1).
 - As I ponder this narrative, I try to put myself in Noah's shoes, which is crazy since I have no reference point. In doing so, I think of a man who was on an ark for thirteen months that was more devastating than anything we can ever imagine. I also imagine him having one of those moments when it hits you, "Me and my family are the only survivors!"
 - No doubt Noah was grateful he survived the flood, which is shown in how he praised Yahweh through his burnt offering to Him.

However, when the dust settles, you must come to grips with the fact that you are all alone. You begin to ponder the amount of death that happened, the devastation that occurred to the earth, all of the animals that died, and now you must be able to repopulate. That's overwhelming. Perhaps that may have factored into him having one of emotional moments where you reach for a drink to cope. Little did he realize what would happen next. It would become known as his own garden folly.

3. Ham, the Father of Canaan

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.**

a. The Sin of Ham: What Happened?

Ham's Sin: Four Views	
VIEW 1 VOYEURISM	<p>Ham's offense was shamefully staring at his father's nakedness and subsequently telling his brothers about it.</p> <p>The strength of this view is in its literal reading of the text. Nakedness is a shameful state in the Hebrew Bible, often depicted in war of total victory.</p> <p>The difficulty is the degree Noah curses Ham's future son. He does not hold back. Canaan's descendants will be lowly slaves to his brothers. It is important to note that Noah is cursing his own grandson. The irony here is the person you would expect to get cursed, Ham, does not.</p>
VIEW 2 PATERNAL INCEST	<p>Ham's Shocking offense was that he sexually abused his father. He is pulling a power play on his family. He is the alpha male.</p> <p>The Strength of this view is that the phrase, <i>"to look on the nakedness of..."</i> is a biblical Hebrew figure of speech that refers to sexual intercourse.</p> <p>Leviticus 20:17: 'If <i>there is</i> a man <u>who takes</u> his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt.</p> <p>Leviticus 18:6: 'None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the Lord (Ezekiel 16:36).</p> <p>Ham's sin was incest. This could explain how Noah knew what his youngest son did.</p> <p>The difficulty is that it still doesn't explain why Noah cursed Canaan, when he had not been born yet. He was not culpable. His job was to repopulate the earth.</p>
VIEW 3 MATERNAL INCEST	<p>Ham's offense would be that he sexually abused his mother, who was his father's nakedness. He usurped his father to be the alpha male in family.</p> <p>The Strength: Scriptural Support.</p> <p>Leviticus 18:7-8 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness.</p> <p>'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. (Note: This would correlate with the concept of the husband and the wife <i>becoming one flesh</i>). Why would Ham do such a thing. It's a power play. Ham wants to usurp the head of the family. Alpha male. Think Reuben and Jacob (Gen. 35:33), Absalon and David.</p> <p>May explain why Noah would curse his grandson, Caanan. His wife was impregnated by Ham. Ham would then be an archetype of the Canaanites.</p> <p>The Difficulty is believing Ham would actually tell his brothers that he violated mom.</p>

b. “Seeing and Taking” themes

- **Genesis 3: Eve:** She saw that the fruit was good, and she took of it. Knew afterwards they were naked (Genesis 3:6)
- **Genesis 6: Sons of God and daughters of man:** The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose (Genesis 6:3)
- **Genesis 9: Ham:** He saw his father was naked and told his brothers.

c. Shem and Japheth

- **Take a garment** and place and lay it over their shoulders and walk backward to cover their brothers nakedness.
- **Their faces were turned away** (backwards) from seeing the nakedness of their father. The very action of these brothers communicates their priority was to honor their mother and father.
- Another theme reveals itself. Another son sins against his family like Cain. Ham is an archetypal Cain. Only in this case, the rest of the family bond together.

4. A Startling Discovery

24 **When Noah awoke from his wine,**
he knew what his youngest son had done

a. A Theme in Scripture. God Followers don't always finish well.

- **Here we have Noah**, who was righteous and blameless before God, but he got drunk and let his guard down. How could Noah do this. It is because like you and I, Noah was a sinner. When God proclaimed a covenant never to destroy the land again by a flood; he stated that the intent of the human heart is evil from youth. There have been other godly men that have fallen.
- **Moses:** He was a friend of God, someone God spoke to face to face (Exodus 33:11, Numbers 12:8), yet when he got older, his anger got the best of him because they wanted some water. God simply told Moses to speak to the rock, but in anger he struck it with his staff two times. That outburst caused him his opportunity to guide the people to the promised land.
- **King David:** He was a man after God's own heart until one day in his fifties he decided to sleep with Bathsheba. His life was never the same. Nathan the prophet told him that the sword would never depart from his household. It never did.
- **Solomon:** At the age of twelve was asked by God in a dream what he wanted as he reigned as king. His response. Not riches or power, but rather wisdom and discernment. He started off well; but in his latter years he married 700 wives and had 300 concubines, who led him to worship other gods and build shrines for them (1 Kings 11:7-8). God told him his kingdom would be divided.
- **Hezekiah:** He proudly showed the Babylonian envoys his treasures and everything in his palace and kingdom. Hezekiah's pride and lack of discretion in showing his wealth to the Babylonians, who were then an emerging power, led to this prophecy of doom, that Israel would be conquered and deported to Babylon.

Billy Graham often emphasized the importance of finishing well in one's Christian life and ministry. We must be diligent to finish well with the help of Jesus. These last two years, so many ministers that were successful in their prime, have now fallen.

- #### b. Noah knew what his youngest son had done.
- We are not told how, though there have been many theories given, including that Ham made Noah a eunuch. We simply do not know. One thing that seems clear from his actions, he did not honor his father, Noah. Everyone has a story, but Ham's revealed that he was the seed of the snake, not the woman.

5. Noah Speaks: Blessings and Cursing

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.”

a. **Noah Speaks for the First Time.** Interestingly, the blessings and curses Noah gave to his sons represent the only time we ever heard Noah speak. The majority of the story (chapters 6-9) are an account shared by the narrator. We are told that he was righteous and blameless (Genesis 6:1), a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) by Moses, and later Peter. Having said this, when he does speak it is memorable.

b. **Noah Curses Canaan, not Ham directly.** This is a tough one because Noah’s grandson, Canaan, was not born yet or had done anything wrong. Yet his fate was to become the lowest of servants to his brothers.

Somehow, we must reconcile generational sin (Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:7), with the other biblical concept that states each person is only responsible for his or her own sins, not those of their parents (Ezekiel 18:18-20, Deuteronomy 24:16). So how do we parse this conundrum?

The best way is to consider generational sin is to understand that it is passed down and can be punishable by God. In other words, a father’s traits and sin patterns can be passed down to subsequent generations. We see this often with those who have bad habits, dysfunctional family patterns, emotionally and physically abusive to loved ones, even producing generations of alcoholics.

However, this does not necessarily mean these sins cannot be overcome or that damnation is their ultimate fate. The Bible teaches us that each person has the ability to change their trajectory when it comes to God (Ezekiel 18:18-20).

Having said that, how does this relate to Canaan? The first thing we must acknowledge is that we do not know about the person, Canaan. All we know is about his descendants, the Canaanites who had possession of the Promised Land. We do know about their practices. The Canaanites were often described in the Bible as engaging in various practices considered immoral by Israelite standards, including child sacrifice, incest, and bestiality. So in that sense the sins of Ham and possibly Canaan were passed down. However, each Canaanite had a chance to repent and get right with God. A perfect example is the Canaanite woman, Rahab. She chose to follow God and not her own people. Today she has the honor of being listed in Matthew’s genealogy (Matthew 1:5).

c. **Shem:** Unlike Ham’s future son, Canaan, Shem was blessed. Shem will become the ancestor of Abraham, who is the father of the nation of Israel. This is the main reason he is often listed first in the listing of Noah’s biological sons. The focus here is on prominence. You cannot get more dominant than eventually having a lineage that becomes God’s chosen people.

As for Japheth. His name literally means, to enlarge. That’s what Noah wants of him, to have God enlarge his sphere of influence. God honored that blessing. Japheth’s line is responsible for areas in Asia Minor (Turkey), Europe, and Persia).

Japheth's Descendants

- **Gomer:** Often associated with the Cimmerians, and potentially linked to the Celts, Phrygians, and some Germanic peoples.
- **Magog:** Linked to the Scythians, Norsemen, and some early Slavs.
- **Madai:** Typically identified as the Medes but also connected to other Iranian groups like the Mannai and Mitanni.
- **Javan:** Represents the Greeks, particularly the Ionians.
- **Tubal:** Associated with the Tibarenians, and potentially with the Georgians, Circassians, and some Illyrian groups.
- **Meshech:** Linked to the Moschians, and potentially to early Slavs, Phrygians, and Georgians.
- **Tiras:** Remains somewhat obscure, but is often connected to the Thracians and possibly the Etruscans.

6. The Conclusion of Genesis 5

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.

Genesis 5:31-32

31 So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

32 Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of
Shem, **Ham**, and **Japheth**.

- a. Noah lived three hundred and fifty more years after the flood, and a grand total of nine hundred and fifty years. What a life he encountered. He is definitely someone I can't wait to talk to on the New Earth / New heaven. How did you build the ark? What was it like to see all those animals coming to you in pairs? What was it like to go through the storm? What was going on when you got drunk? What really happened when Ham uncovered your nakedness? Was it hard to curse your grandson? How did you manage to follow God and turn away, in all you went through in life? I want to hear his story. No doubt, I will have to take a number.
- b. As Noah's life came to an end, there is one more feature that shows how detail the biblical authors incorporated. In Genesis 5:31-32, when Noah's genealogy was given in the line of Seth, the common phrase at the end of an antediluvian's life not included, which is and he died. We only read that Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
However, now as the story of Noah comes to an end, we get that final phrase, "So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died". What a life. One that has gone down in infamy!