

## Genesis 9

The world had become corrupted and God saw that Noah was still righteous, despite his environment. So, God gave Noah the choice to build the ark and save the world, which he did. A year later, Noah exits the ark, builds an altar and worships God. God responds by promising not to flood the world again. Chapter 9 records the covenant God made with Noah and it records Noah's sin, to show once again that no one is perfect.

### TRANSLATION - 9:1-7:

**1** Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. **2** Fear of you and dread of you will be on all the living of earth and on every bird of the heavens in all which creeps on the land and on every fish of the sea, in your hand they are given. **3** Every creeping thing which it [has] life to you will be for food like green grass I give to you, all of it. **4** Only flesh with its life, its blood you will not at all eat. **5** And only your blood for your life I will require, from the hand every animal I will require it and from the hand of man, from the hand of man's brother I will require the life of man. **6** Pouring blood the man, by man his blood will be poured because in the image of God, He made man. **7** Even you, be fruitful and multiply, swarm in the earth, and multiply in it."

### WORDS:

"Fear" (11 times; the verb is found 317 times with the entire word family used 435 times) and "dread" (ver. 2; 55 times) are often reactions of man to God's power. The former word can be understood in the sense of "worship" in some contexts, the result of *fear* of God. The latter word can mean to be "discouraged" or be "shattered." The "grass" (ver. 3) was made in 1:11-12 and given for food in 1:29-30. "Life" (ver. 4, 5) is *nephesh*, "soul." The verb "require" (165 times) is found in verse 5 three times, showing God's holy nature expressed in judgment. "Hand" is also found three times, showing that God's judgment will be implemented through the instrumentality of human beings. Humans will have to judge capital cases based on God's criteria. "Man" is found three times as well; the second "man" is the word *ish*, which we saw when Adam named Eve (2:23) because the woman (*issha*) was taken out of man (*ish*). The other two words, "man," translate the word which can be translated "land," or Adam's name. To "pour" (ver. 6; 117 times) is often, though not exclusively, used of: 1) pouring out (shedding) man's blood (its single most frequent occurrence), and 2) God pouring out His wrath. For "image," see the discussion at 1:26.

### GRAMMAR:

"You" in verse 2 is plural so that God is speaking to mankind, not just Noah. The negative command in verse 4 is emphatic (*lo* with the indicative). The "even you" at the beginning of verse 7 is disjunctive, drawing the discussion directly to Noah.

### COMMENTS:

The commands God gave Noah in verses 1 and 7 are the same commands God gave Adam in the garden when He created man (1:28) and immediately following the disembarkation (8:17). God wants heaven to be populated. Man needs to reproduce! Notice "multiply" is used twice in verse 7. This is the third time God has blessed humanity (1:28; 9:1).

God also reiterates, in different words, the sovereignty man will have over the animal world. This sovereignty will extend to allowing man to eat animals, if it was not done or allowed before. However, God will not allow man to eat blood or raw meat. A "theology of blood" will also run through the testaments, culminating in the blood of Christ being shed for the forgiveness of sins. "Blood" is mentioned in the NT 97 times.

It is clear that God intends, commands ("I require" is found 3 times in verse 5), man to keep violence from spiraling out of control, as it had done before the flood. To that end, man is

given the power of capital punishment (cf. Psa. 9:12; Ezek. 33:6). Some thirty crimes / sins under the law of Moses were punished by capital punishment and the NT supports the same responsibility for the civil government (cf. Rom. 13:4). This is the first time “brother” has been used since Genesis 4:8-11. The reason God requires respect for life, the sanctity of life, is because man is made in the image of God. Once again, contrary to John Calvin and those who follow his deterministic view of the sovereignty of God, man still reflects the image of God. It has not been “marred” by the sin of Adam and the expulsion from Eden.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Verses 1 & 7 emphasize to Noah and his sons that God wants them to reproduce! “Go have kids!” God says. Additionally, God gave Noah and his sons and future generations the permission and the responsibility to take the life of murders. God did not want the violence in the world to spiral out of control as it had before the flood.

*Contemporaries in Moses’ day* - Compare the rapid growth of Israel in the land of Egypt in Exodus 1:7 with God’s command to Noah’s family in 9:7. The ideas, if not the words “fear and dread,” are often used in military contexts (Deut. 1:21; 11:25; 26:8; 31:8; 34:12). Man has the power of life and death over criminals (Deut. 19:12; 20:13, etc.). Pouring out man’s blood pollutes the land (Num. 35:33), reminiscent of Cain killing Abel (4:10).

God did not allow the Israelites to drink blood or eat meat with blood in it (Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16-24; 1 Sam. 14:32-34). The life of man and animals is “in the blood” (Lev. 17:11; Deut. 12:23). There is no parallel to this legislation in ANE literature. God will also require the “death penalty” for animals which kill humans (Exo. 21:28-29). In this latter passage, God suggests that owners of animals (including pets) are responsible for their behavior. While the Law commanded the death penalty in certain cases, including murder, the Law also allowed freedom for one who had killed someone inadvertently (Exo. 21:12-14; Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 19:1-13). All killing, in God’s eyes, is not equal.

*Later Hebrew writers* - David recognizes that God gave mankind dominion over the animal kingdom (Psa. 8:3-8).

*NT writers* - It is responsible to conclude, we believe, that God wanted man to reproduce so that heaven could be heavily populated as much as possible with God’s human creation. Indeed, John pictures heaven as having a number “which no one could count” (Rev. 7:9). The distinction between clean and unclean animals will be removed under the law of Christ (Mark 7:18-20; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Acts 10:9-16). We believe that the injunction against eating blood and things strangled, found in the decree of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:29, was simply for the Gentiles of that age, in order to have peace with their Jewish brethren. The injunction against eating food sacrificed to idols is specifically overturned in 1 Corinthians 8 while the injunction against sexual immorality is repeated throughout the NT. God has still given man responsibility to keep peace in society by taking the life of evildoers (Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:4; 1 Tim. 1:9; 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:17).

#### TRANSLATION - 9:8-17:

**8** And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, **9** “I myself (behold!) am establishing my covenant with you and with your seed after you. **10** And with every living soul which [is] with you, with the bird, with the animal, and all life of earth with you, from all going out of the ark, to all life of the earth. **11** And I will establish my covenant with you and I will not cut off all flesh again [by] the waters of the flood and there will not again be a flood to destroy the earth.” **12** Then God said, “This [is] the sign of the covenant which I, myself, am giving between me and you and every living soul, which [is] with you to indefinite generations. **13** And My bow I am putting in the cloud and it will be for a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. **14** And it will be when I bring a cloud on the earth and I will see it, the bow in the cloud **15** then I will remember my covenant which [is] between me and you and every living soul and all flesh and there will not be again the waters for a flood to destroy all flesh. **16** And the bow will be in the cloud and I will see it to remember the covenant indefinitely between God and

every living soul, [and] all flesh which [is] on the earth.” **17** Then God said to Noah, “This [is] the sign of the covenant which I am establishing between me and all flesh which [is] on the earth.”

#### WORDS:

“Behold” (ver. 9) emphasizes God’s words. “Covenant” was first used in 6:18. It is a significant biblical word and a key theme throughout the OT and into the NT. “Seed” is also a key word in Genesis as mankind anticipates the “seed of woman” from 3:15 who will crush the head of the serpent. “Soul” (ver. 10, 12, 15) is translated earlier as “life” (*nephesh*), which in the creation and flood accounts includes both humans and animals. “Cut off” (ver. 11) becomes the verb most closely associated with establishing a covenant. “Indefinite” (ver. 12, 16) is often, and can be so translated here, as “forever.” “Sign” is used 79 times. While we have seen the word before (1:14; 4:15), most of its uses refer to miraculous signs such as the plagues on Egypt. In fact, 39 uses of the word are in the Pentateuch.

“Bow” (ver. 13) means a rainbow here, but in other places it refers to the weapon used with arrows. We are not sure that God, through Moses, intended to portray military imagery here, but it is consistent with the warrior imagery from the flood; see 7:18 and comments there. It is likely that the Hebrew word simply refers to the *shape* and the word could refer to a rainbow or a bow, depending on context. God had “remembered” Noah in 8:1 (cf. 9:16).

#### COMMENTS:

The covenant God is making with Noah (see 6:18 for its first reference) will clearly involve all life, all the forms of life which had been destroyed on earth, of which some representatives had been spared on the ark. “Covenant” is found seven times in verses 9-17. Compare the non-spiritual use of the concept of “covenant,” translated “allies” in Genesis 14:13, which could be translated there literally as “owners of a covenant.” This covenant says that God will not destroy the earth, all flesh, ever again by waters of a flood (verse 11). We do not have to understand that this is the first appearance of the rainbow. God could have simply meant that He would utilize the rainbow as the sign of His covenant. In the same way, circumcision was practiced among other ANE peoples but for the Israelites, it was the sign of God’s covenant with them (Gen. 17:9-14). When God saw the bow in the cloud, He would remember (cf. 8:1 and comments there) the promise He had made, not to destroy the world again by water.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Most of us, after experiencing a tragedy, ask ourselves, “Is this going to happen again?” When it comes to the flood, God says, “No. It will never happen again.”

*Later Hebrew writers* - The rainbow is referenced again in Ezekiel 1:28. As assuredly as God has promised not to destroy the world with a flood again, so God has sworn that He will fulfill His promise made with Israel (Isa. 54:9-10).

*NT writers* - John uses the rainbow imagery in his depiction of the beauties of heaven (Rev. 4:3; 10:1).

#### TRANSLATION - 9:18-29:

**18** The sons of Noah [who were] coming out from the ark [were] Shem and Ham and Japheth and Ham [was] the father of Canaan. **19** These three [were] sons of Noah and from these all the earth was distributed. **20** And Noah began, [the first] man [to cultivate] the land and he planted a vineyard. **21** And he drank from the wine and was drunk and lay uncovered in the middle of the tent. **22** Then Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and announced to his two brothers outside. **23** Then Shem took and Japheth the garment and laid it on the shoulders of both and walked backwards and covered the nakedness of their father and their faces [were] backwards so the nakedness of their father they did not see. **24** Then

Noah awoke from his wine and knew what he did to him, his youngest son. **25** So he said, “I curse Canaan, the servant of servants he will be to his brothers.” **26** And he said, “Blessed by Jehovah God [is] Shem and Canaan will be servant to him. **27** Let God enlarge for Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem and Canaan will be a servant to him.” **28** Then Noah lived, after the flood, three hundred and fifty years. **29** And all the days of Noah were nine hundred fifty years and he died.

#### WORDS:

“Distributed” (ver. 19; 19 times) is often translated “scattered.” In the sense of “scattering people,” see 1 Sam. 13:11; Isa. 33:3. “Planted” (ver. 20) was what God did in Eden (2:8). “Drank” (ver. 21) is used 217 times, “wine,” 141 times, and “drunk” (a different word from “to drink”) is used 18 times, almost always used in a negative way. It is a related word with the “strong drink,” a beer made from barley, other grain, or fruit. All wine in ancient times was light wine. The fortification of wine with alcohol (an Arabic word) was done in the Middle Ages. We do not know how fermented the wine was but it was likely 7-10% alcohol. Modern beer is 4.5%, wine is 11% and liquor is 37%.

“Nakedness” (ver. 22) is used 54 times. Its related word was used in 2:25 relative to Adam and Eve and when they realized they were naked, they were ashamed (3:7).

“Garment” (ver. 23) is used 31 times and is too generic for us to picture what it was.

“Awoke” (ver. 24) is used 11 times. “Curse” (ver. 25) is the same strong verb used by God in the cursing of Adam, the serpent, and Cain (Gen. 3:14, 17; 4:11). “Servant of servants” (ver. 25) is the Hebrew method of showing the superlative: the lowest servant. “Let enlarge” (ver. 27; 136x) is a related word with “Japheth.” “Let dwell” is used 130 times.

#### COMMENTS:

Noah disembarked from the ark, along with his sons. There are now only four men and four women on the entire earth. No wonder God wants them to go multiply! Verse 19 emphasizes that everyone now descends from Noah, through one of his three sons. Their genealogies will be given in the next chapter.

Noah was, of course, not a perfect man and he had an imperfect knowledge. He planted a vineyard, drank its wine, and became drunk. We do not know if Noah was the first to have done this. Since this is the first account of any of this behavior, we do not know how much knowledge Noah, himself, had of wine and its dangers. Noah is not rebuked for his drunkenness, although his example ought to be instructive. The drunkenness precipitated Noah laying exposed naked in his tent. We have seen that nakedness makes (ought to make) man ashamed (3:7, 10 in contrast with 2:25).

The impropriety happens when Ham sees his father’s nakedness and, rather than cover him, announced the matter to his brothers. We presume that the misbehavior was in Ham’s announcement of his father’s error, rather than covering up his father’s nakedness. Some suggest that Ham was guilty of some type of sexual impropriety with his father but the text does not hint at that behavior at all. Notice in verse 23 that Shem and Japheth do all they can not to see their father’s nakedness. The emphasis in the text is on Noah’s nakedness. Ham should not have seen it. He should have looked away. He should have covered his eyes. He should have taken the initiative to cover his father. Shem and Japheth laid the garment over their shoulders and walked backwards in order to cover Noah and kept their heads turned so as to cover Noah.

When Noah awoke from his stupor, he apparently was informed about what Ham had done to him. Ham is identified as Noah’s youngest son. So, Noah curses Ham by cursing Ham’s son, Canaan. Canaan was introduced into the text in verse 18 and he is identified as the son of Ham in verses 22, 25, 26, 27. This is the first time man curses someone (cf. 3:14, 17; 4:11-12; 8:21). Canaan’s curse will be that he will be the “slave of slaves,” the lowest of slaves to his brothers. Many have wondered why Canaan was cursed instead of Ham. Was Canaan involved in some way? The best we can surmise is that Noah cursed Ham by cursing Canaan.

We also presume that this is God's way of letting Moses' contemporaries know that the descendants of Canaan, the Canaanites (70 times in the OT), have been cursed by God since the days of Noah.

In verse 26, Noah then blessed Jehovah God, the God of Shem and states that Canaan will be the slave of Shem. The Messianic seed, then, will flow through Shem. Here, Noah (assuredly unknowingly) predicts the rulership of the family of Shem (Israel) over the families of the Canaanites. God will give the land of Canaan to the Israelites under Joshua. Noah also says (ver. 27) that God will enlarge Japheth and he will dwell in the tent of Shem and Canaan will be his slave. We do not know how God would fulfill this prophecy in the immediate context, but we do know that the Gentiles (descendants of Japheth) become a part of the spiritual family of Shem in the church of Jesus Christ.

Noah lived three centuries after God sent the flood and, through his sons, Noah repopulates the earth, which Moses will share in chapter 10. The chapter ends with "and he died." The refrain which was repeated often in chapter 5 and now concludes the life of Noah and the story of the antediluvian world.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - The curse on Canaan was not a curse to eternal damnation; it was a curse to be a slave to his family. God uses this curse uttered by Noah to lay the groundwork for the later punishment of the Canaanites under the leadership of Joshua.

*Contemporaries in Moses' day* - According to Genesis 10:6, the descendants of Ham include Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan or the nations of Palestine. God will warn the Israelites to stay away from the Canaanites and their ungodly idolatry and immorality (Lev. 18:3; 20:23). Consequently, they will be driven from the land (Exo. 3:8, 17; Deut. 7:1; 20:17). Lot was also drunk and shamed himself (Gen. 19:30ff). For positive effects of wine, see also Deut. 14:26; Prov. 31:4-7. For negative effects, see Prov. 23:29-35. The curse on the Canaanites was likely fulfilled in Joshua's day: Joshua 9:23; 1 Kings 9:21.

Wine was offered in sacrifices to God (Num. 15:5-10; Deut. 14:26) but its dangers were also emphasized (Num. 6:3-4; Lev. 10:9). God forbid His children from exposing their nakedness (Exo. 20:26; 28:42; Deut. 23:13-15). Uncovering the nakedness of someone, if not one's spouse, was prohibited (Lev. 18:6-18). Honoring one's parents is certainly one of the Ten Commandments and related laws (Exo. 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18-21; 27:15-26). Moses' contemporaries are about to enter the Promised Land, inhabited by the Canaanites. They have recently experienced God's saving power over the Egyptians. Genesis informs them that the Canaanites are cursed; they should be "easy pickings."

*Later Hebrew writers* - Wine is a gift (Psa. 104:15) and the vineyard was used as a symbol for Israel (Isa. 5:1-7). Yet, the dangers of wine are also emphasized (Isa. 5:22; 28:7; Jer. 51:57; Prov. 21:17; 23:20-21, 29-35; 1 Sam. 1:14; Hab. 2:15; Lam. 4:21). Exposing one's nakedness is demeaning (2 Sam. 6:14, 16). Isaiah predicts a day when the descendants of Japheth will be joined to Israel (Isa. 66:19-20). Isaiah will also predict the joining of Egypt and Assyria (descendants of Ham) with the nation of Israel (19:23-25). The Canaanites will be made into slaves by Joshua (16:10) as well as the kings (1 Kings 9:21).

*NT writers* - For the Gentiles, descendants of Japheth, to dwell in the tents of Shem is fulfilled in a spiritual way when the Gentiles join the Jews in the church of Christ (Eph. 3:6). God also warns that children ought to respect their parents in the NT age (1 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20).