

**Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church**  
10 Downing Street, Oakleigh, Vic. 3166

**DHW**  
**BIBLE STUDY CLASS**

**BOOK OF GENESIS**

**Lesson 8**

**Genesis 9**

**INTRODUCTION**

Noah and his family stepped out into a new world and a new beginning. Noah is considered as the second head of the human race. Indeed, the whole earth was populated through Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth (v.19). God promised to provide for them and to protect them. God promised never to destroy the human race again by flood, and set the rainbow as a sign of His promise. But He placed a prohibition, that is, a person or an animal must not take the life of a man.

The chapter concludes on a sad note. Noah was drunk with wine and was naked. Ham, his son, when he saw his father in this condition, did not adopt a right attitude. Instead he showed disrespect towards his father. Consequently, when Noah knew about what Ham did, he pronounced a curse upon his son, Canaan.

The opening words of the chapter promise new hope for Noah, for

God blessed him and his sons and commanded them to be fruitful, to multiply and replenish the earth. God established his covenant with Noah and his "seed" after him, and with every living creature that was with him in the ark (v.8-9). From then onwards God was and still is known as a Covenant-making and Covenant-keeping God.

Chapter 9 can be divided into the following sections:

- 1) God blessed Noah (9:1-3);
- 2) God imposed two prohibitions (9:4-7);
- 3) God established His Covenant with Noah (9:8-17);
- 4) Re-population of the earth (9:18-19);
- 5) Ham sinned against Noah, his father (9:20-29).

**God Blesses Noah**

*And God blessed Noah and his sons* is a significant declaration at the outset of a new world and a new order. The blessing of God is not just a wishful expression but it has the giving of the blessing. In this particular case, God told them to *be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth* (v.1). This blessing is similar to the creation blessing in Genesis 1:28. The exact words were used. These words remind man that he is still dependent on God who is the Supreme and Sovereign Ruler and Sustainer of the universe. God's active part in blessing man is necessary for the realisation of the substance of the blessing. In the case

here, the blessing involved the gift of fruitfulness, for man cannot impart this to himself. The command *to multiply* involves man's duty to procreate for the glory of God by teaching his descendants the knowledge of God and how they should fulfil their obligations to Him. The commandment to replenish the earth demands that man does not concentrate on a particular area or only a few places but to spread out to the ends of the earth.<sup>1</sup> The pre-Flood condition in which the animals voluntarily submitted to man was no more. Instead, this voluntary submission is being replaced by the "directing of fang, tooth and claw against man and one another." It is required of man to exercise patient effort in subduing the animals to his will so that they can be useful to him.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, God made the animals to fear and dread mankind.

### God Imposes Two Prohibitions

This preservation of life is not restricted to the relationship between man and the animals. God imposed the death penalty on any person or animal that takes the life of a man. Capital punishment was first introduced and it would be carried out for the murder or killing of a man. Observe that man still retained the image of God, even after the Fall. Man lives and dies for the glory of God. To snuff the life out of man is to demonstrate a disregard and disrespect for God, his Creator. God, therefore, gives man the sanction to mete out capital punishment upon his fellowman who is guilty of murder.

Herein implies the institution of future government to maintain order and the welfare of man. God either uses the institution of human government or He Himself would directly exert the punishment on the culprit. When the government of man carries out the punishment, it is done officially and by divine directive. The benefit of this law is obvious. It is for the safeguarding of the human race. Although God has destroyed the pre-Flood world of wicked and evil men, God wants man to know that the life or the soul of a man is very precious in His sight. The soul of man is worth more than all the riches and wealth of this world!<sup>3</sup>

In the matter of food for man's physical sustenance, God allowed man to kill *every moving thing* for meat (v.3). Originally man was a vegetable-fruit eater. Now he may kill an animal for meat. But there is a prohibition. He is not to eat *flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof* (v.4). Apparently the reason for the prohibition is that life of a person or an animal is in the blood, and as such it is sacred to God. This prohibition therefore demands that any killing of an animal for food, the blood must be properly drained out. This prohibition is also imposed in the New Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Leupold,328; Stigers 115

<sup>2</sup> Stigers, 115.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 8:36 *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

In the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) the Apostles and early church fathers stipulated that Gentile believers should refrain from eating blood (Acts 15:20, 28,29).<sup>4</sup>

### God Establishes His Covenant

God spoke three times to Noah (vv8-11). God announced His intention of making a covenant. God stipulated its contents (vv. 12-16), and gave the sign of the covenant (v.17). God thus reaffirmed the sign of His covenant. God now told Noah that He was going to establish his covenant with him and his seed after him. God's use of the first person personal pronoun in His declaration is significant and emphatic: ***And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you*** (v9). God had earlier promised Noah that He would make a covenant with him (6:18). Now it took effect. God made this covenant with Noah and with every living creature that was with him (v.8). The emphatic first person pronoun affirms that the covenant was initiated by God and not man. God made it; God fixed the terms and the conditions; and God bound Himself.<sup>5</sup>

This covenant is different from covenants, which are made by man. For in man's covenant the terms and conditions must be kept by both parties for it to be valid and has a date of termination. In God's covenant with man, it is God who binds Himself. The validity of the covenant does not depend on man to accept it. Note that the animals do not accept a covenant. It

is binding on man unconditionally and is permanent.<sup>6</sup> This kind of covenant is called a **suzerainty covenant**. Observe that the partners to the covenant are referred to in different ways: *with you, and with your seed after you* (v.9); *And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, and all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth* (v.10); *with you* (v.11); *between me and you and every living creature that is with you* (v.12); *between me and the earth* (v.13); *between me and you and every living creature of all flesh* (v.15); *between God and every living creature of all flesh* (v.16); *between me and all flesh* (v.17). These repetitions are for the purpose of underscoring the message that God intended to convey.

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<sup>4</sup>Acts 15:20 *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood...28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.*

<sup>5</sup> From verses 9-17, note the number of times the emphatic personal pronoun was used by God in reference to the covenant. There are no less than 17 times!

<sup>6</sup>The Hebrew word for covenant in the Old Testament is *berith* which has a root meaning "to cut." This explains the custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement with each other (see Genesis 15:10; Jeremiah 34:18; Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible, Herbert Lockyer, Sr., editor, s.v. "Covenant.")

The covenant contained a promise. God will no more destroy the inhabitants of the earth by the waters of a flood (v.11).

This does not mean that God will not deal with sin, which is the reason why He destroyed the earth. God still hates sin and will judge man for his sins. One day, God will destroy the earth by fire not by flood.<sup>7</sup> The rainbow in the clouds is the sign given for a token of the promise which God made with Noah. It is an appropriate sign. Whenever the rain has fallen, often we can see a rainbow spanning the sky in the clouds. Are we not reminded of the message it conveys to us? There will never be another flood to destroy the whole earth. Note what God said that whenever He sees the rainbow, He will remember His covenant. Again this does not mean that God easily forgets and has to be reminded. Rather it is God's way of stating that He will keep what He has promised.

### Replenishing the Earth

The names of Noah's three sons are mentioned again.<sup>8</sup> They were Shem, Ham and Japheth. Ham is mentioned again that he *is the father of Canaan* (v.18). The reason why Canaan as the son of Ham is mentioned will be seen in the text that follows. The whole human race after the Deluge originated from the three sons of Noah (v.19). Canaan is therefore the forefather of the Canaanites who inhabited Palestine which included the Hittite, Jebusite, Amorite, Hivite and Girgashite, thus showing that the Canaanites spread

extensively in Palestine (Genesis 10:15-19).<sup>9</sup>

### Human Dignity Marred

The concluding passage ends with a sad note. Noah became the first man to raise a vineyard. As a tiller of the ground, he produced grapes and wine. What went wrong was that Noah had too much to drink and got drunk and lay naked. Many scholars criticise that this Noah could not be the hero Noah of chapter 6:8-9.<sup>10</sup> Why not? Biblical history is replete with accounts of the downfall of men who were once godly and spiritual giants. Some examples of these are: King David, a man who was after God's own heart, yet in the time of temptation, he succumbed and committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11, 12); Peter, the

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<sup>7</sup>2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

<sup>8</sup>The names of Noah's three sons have already been mentioned in Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 7:13. They are reintroduced here because of what is recorded following it.

<sup>9</sup>Read The Oxford Companion to the Bible, editors Bruce M Metzger & Michael D, Coogan, s.v. "Canaan" by P Kyle McCarter Jr.

<sup>10</sup>The production or drinking of wine is neither condemned nor approved in the Bible. It was used to cheer the heart (Judges 9:13; Psalm 104:15), and as a sedative (Proverbs 31:6). But craving in the drinking of wine in excess is condemned in the Bible (Proverbs 23:29-35), and is even equated with harlotry (Hosea 4:10-11, 18) which numbs the longing for God (Hamilton, 321).

Apostle, one who loved the Lord Jesus Christ, denied His Master three times (Luke 22); Jonah the prophet of God, ran away from his responsibility and duty (Jonah 1-2); Samson fell before Delilah (Judges 16). So it happened to Noah too. It is a sad story, but nevertheless true.<sup>11</sup> We see here the impact of alcohol on human morals and its after effects in heartbreaks, broken homes and sometimes death.<sup>12</sup> This account is a warning against those who would indulge in drinking excessive wine and the dire effects of it. While the Old Testament did not prohibit the use of wine, it definitely does not condone drunkenness and nakedness.<sup>13</sup> When Ham saw his father's state of drunkenness and nakedness, he broadcast to his brothers, Shem and Japheth. The two brothers then walked backwards towards their father keeping the sight of their father from them, and covered him. The action of Shem and Japheth is being contrasted with Ham's conduct. Clearly, Ham's attitude and action showed no respect for the dignity of his father. So, the fifth commandment of the Decalogue which commanded all men to honour their father and mother was violated. And it is the only commandment in the Decalogue that a promise of blessing is attached. The commandment was broken and so the blessing was deprived. When Noah was sober and came to know about it, he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham (vv. 18, 25). The descendants of Canaan, the Canaanites were cursed with slavery.

What did Ham actually do to his father? There are some theories. One theory is that Ham committed sexual relationship with his father and then told his brothers. Another theory suggests that Ham had a sexual relationship with his mother and as a result Canaan was born, hence the curse on him. But these are fanciful theories which have no clear basis in the text. In such a situation, it is better to take the plain sense of the text. Ham saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers about it. His attitude and conduct are contrasted with those of Shem and Japheth. And the fact that Noah cursed Ham's son and blessed Shem and Japheth indicates that Ham behaved in a manner that diminished the dignity of his father. That is strange. But the more difficult question is why Ham's son, Canaan, was cursed instead of Ham? This is a problem in which we must admit that there is no easy or clear answer. But we are beginning to see that in the Decalogue, God visited the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth generations. This can be understood that if the descendants do not commit the same sins, they might have to bear the consequences or the resultant effects of the sins of their fathers,

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<sup>11</sup> These true and candid records of the failures of godly men at the time of temptation are one of the proofs that the Bible is genuinely the work of God and not of man. For man would have glorified his heroes.

<sup>12</sup> D Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Genesis*, (Word Publishers, Waco, Texas, 1987). 112-113.

<sup>13</sup> Ross, 213

through no fault of theirs. Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezekiel 18:2 clearly state that those in captivity was through no fault of their own.<sup>14</sup> How can the curse upon Canaan be explained? Some bible scholars would admit that “we do not know why the son bears the consequences of the father’s improprieties.”<sup>15</sup> However, some other bible scholars attempt to give an explanation. Noah’s curse on Canaan and not on Ham is prophetic. Noah was foretelling that Canaan was not punished for the iniquity of his father. Rather his own moral depravity, which he himself developed and retained, was foretold. The evil traits of Ham had no doubt been discerned by Noah as marking Canaan, the son, more distinctly.<sup>16</sup> History showed that the Canaanites were notorious throughout the Old Testament for their unrestrained sexual practices, and Leviticus 18:3 links both Egypt and Canaan as peoples whose habits are abominable.<sup>17</sup>

In the same vein, the blessings upon Shem and Japheth were also prophetic. In other words, they project beyond their time. The blessing of Shem was directed to the LORD instead of Shem. Noah saw the blessings that God would bestow upon Shem, and he praised God. Note that the LORD is the God of Shem, the godly line through whom the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ would come. The blessing on Japheth was that his descendants *shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, an expression implying a “friendly sharing of his hospitality and

so of his blessings.” In these curses and blessings it must be recognised that the curses and blessings are made effective by the person who pronounces them. In this case, Noah declared these curses and blessings as inspired by God. If God has no part in them, they would be useless and ineffective.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

We learn that God is merciful. He provided man for the necessities of his body. Man could kill the animals for food in addition to vegetables and fruit. Moreover, knowing the wickedness of men, God provides protection for the human race. He instituted capital punishment on both man and animals when they take the life of a man. Today we see that where capital punishment is abolished there is an increase in violence and murders, not to mention other attending evil. This abolition of the death penalty is a blatant rebellion against God. Every man bears the image of his Creator

<sup>14</sup>Jeremiah 31:29 *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.*

Ezekiel 18:2 *What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?*

<sup>15</sup> Hamilton, 325.

<sup>16</sup> Leupold, 350.

<sup>17</sup> Wenham, 201. *Leviticus 18:3 After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwell, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Leviticus 18 deals with sexual immoralities of various kinds which are abominable to God.*

God. Any cold blooded killing of a man is defiance against his Creator. Man poses himself as knowing himself better than God knows him. Where countries continue to uphold the death penalty for murder, these countries enjoy relatively better security and peace among their people.

Whenever we see the rainbow, it reminds us of the existence of God and His promise. He is the God in which the Bible reveals and the Lord Jesus Christ came to manifest. The Christian God is the ONE TRUE and LIVING GOD! We also praise and thank God that there will never be a global flood again. It shows us that we are dependent on God for our existence. If God so wills to destroy us, He can do it. We are reminded of God's warning that He will end the existence of this present earth and heaven and all its inhabitants with fire (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1).

The next thing we learn is to honour our parents. We should not in any way shame or bring disrepute to our parents. Rather we should learn to help them in their weaknesses and failures, and pray for them. If they are unbelievers, all the more, we should share God's Word and His salvation in Christ Jesus with them.  
GOD BLESS YOU.