



Several years ago, I signed up for a free two-week trial of ancestry.com. Because I had full access for a limited time, I spent a considerable amount of time tracing my family tree – staying up later than usual. In my searching, I found certain pieces of information that I found fascinating. For example, in one of my lines, if I did the genealogy correctly, I discovered that some of my ancestors arrived only about 15 years after the Mayflower. In another line, I found the man who married my great-great grandmother, even though she was a single mom in the 1890's. I found pictures of family that seem to tell stories of their own.

But why did I spend all of this time searching out my ancestry? Who cares about family who have gone before us? Well, I still get perplexed as to an answer for that question, but at a minimum, we know we're connected to our ancestors. We know that their story, in certain ways, is our story. For example, my great grandfather never told his family he was adopted until he was in his 80's. The shame of being adopted and being born to a woman who wasn't married was immense. Yet, a man married his mom and took care of him. And then, when my great-grandfather was an adult, he was introduced to Jesus and came to faith in Christ, and followed Jesus. The Spirit continually worked in his life – even into his 80's where he finally felt free to share about his childhood. And, his faith affected my grandfather, which affected my mom, which affected me. And here I am.

Our ancestry matters. And, this is the case for us spiritually as well. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, we're looking at the book of Genesis, and some people could wonder why we would even study a book that dates back thousands of years and talks about people who are long gone. There are many answers that we can give. Some could simply read Genesis because it piques their interest and they find it intriguing. But I think most of us here would say that we are looking at it because this is God's Word, and every word from God matters. I think many here might also say that Genesis is worthwhile because it shows us God's intentions with creation. But I wonder if many would say that this matters because we read stories about *our* ancestors here. We are connected to these people. Of course, we're all connected to Adam and Eve. We're all connected to Noah. But I also mean this from a spiritual perspective. In the New Testament, we're told that all who have faith in Jesus are sons of Abraham. That means we're part of God's family and we have a spiritual lineage that we share with Abraham.

Therefore, when we read narratives in Genesis, we can read them because they connect with us. They matter to us. And so, we can echo the apostle Paul's words in Romans 15: **For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 15:4.

The stories of pre-Jewish people matters to us because they're human. We're human. And we're related to them because of Jesus. So, we come to the text today, and the ancestry continues. We're going to discover how people expanded on the earth and even where certain people groups came from. In all of this, I pray that we would see God's glory on display as he moves through *our* family line.

With all this said, let me give you the main idea of the sermon this morning: **God's glory is on display through his mercy and judgment over sin.** You hear mercy through judgment often here because this theme is consistent through the Scripture. And, as we enter into a post-flood world, we quickly discover that God's glory hasn't changed. He is merciful and gracious and he is also the Judge. The flood hasn't changed God, and we see that clearly in this short text. Let's read it together in Genesis 9:18-29 now:

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*<sup>18</sup> The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) <sup>19</sup> These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. <sup>20</sup> Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. <sup>22</sup> And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. <sup>24</sup> When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup> he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." <sup>26</sup> He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup> May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant." <sup>28</sup> After the flood Noah lived 350 years. <sup>29</sup> All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. <sup>2</sup>*

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Now that the flood waters have receded, we have a brief introduction into what happens next. Noah and his sons (and obviously their wives) left the ark. We read that all people groups came from Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We also get this special emphasis on Ham being the father of Canaan – which will be important to explain a little later. But for now, it's helpful to see that in this section, the word "Canaan" shows up five times. The repetition makes clear that God wants the readers to understand something about Canaan in this story.

So, with this introduction of Noah and his family exiting the ark and entering this "new creation" that we spoke of last week, we now see how the family interacted with one another in this new creation. And we discover how God responds to people in this world.

### 1. God's glory. . .over sin (vv. 20-23).

All I want to do on this first point is to emphasize the specific sins that are mentioned in these verses. So, let's look at verses 20-23 again: <sup>20</sup> **Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.** <sup>21</sup> **He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.** <sup>22</sup> **And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.** <sup>23</sup> **Then Shem and Japheth**

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:18–29.

**took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.**<sup>3</sup>

Moses tells us here that Noah was the first person to create grape vineyards. What's intriguing here is that the word "soil" here is the same word for "ground" when referencing Adam in the original creation. Again, this emphasizing that Noah is part of a new creation. He is, in a way, a second kind of Adam. Adam failed. Now, what is Noah going to do?

**Noah's Sin (v. 20-21).** Well, we're told that Noah drank wine, but then comes the sins. He became drunk and laid naked in his tent. Noah follows in Adam and Eve's footsteps. They use food from the ground for their own selfish pleasures. Noah does the same. So, we have both food and drink in Genesis being used to reveal rebellious hearts.

Now, you might say, "Why is this sinful?" We're not told anywhere here that God found this sinful. Maybe Noah was ok in doing this. But, this is the first mention of getting drunk with wine, and in Scriptures, the first mention of something carries significant weight in understanding something. If we saw passages after this supporting getting drunk, we should then say Noah did nothing wrong. But, when we go to a place like Lamentations 4:21 and read God speaking punishment to a people saying, **"to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare."**<sup>4</sup> Or, in Habakkuk 2:15, **"Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!"**<sup>5</sup> In these two passages, we find drunkenness and nakedness going together – and God speaks of this shamefully. In essence, God is saying these nations are going to act like Noah did.

But I do want to emphasize one specific point right here. Praise God for his common grace covenant that we read about last week. Noah is not perfect. What Noah does here emphasizes the truth that both David and I have mentioned in previous weeks. Noah was not righteous because of his greatness. He was righteous because he trusted the Lord and God gifted him with righteousness through faith. And I want you to see the immense love of God in this narrative. God had done all this rescue of Noah. Cared for Noah, saved Noah from the flood. Noah even worshipped the Lord with a sacrifice. And yet Noah neglected the Lord here.

And what does God do here? He doesn't reject Noah. The proof of his covenant is that he did not destroy Noah. He's patient not only with Noah, but with Noah's children. So, even in the face of sin, God's mercy shines. But it's not only Noah's sin that's mentioned here. The sin that is particularly emphasized in this text is the sin of Ham.

**Ham's Sin (vv. 22-23).** Read 22-23 with me: <sup>22</sup> **And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.** <sup>23</sup> **Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.**<sup>6</sup>

Ok, what's going on here?! What's the problem? There are various interpretations of what's going on here, and I don't know if we can actually know with absolute certainty everything that has happened, but let me say this: some think that "saw the nakedness of his father" means that Ham did something

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:20–23.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), La 4:21.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Hab 2:15.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:22–23.

sexual with either his dad or his mom. They view it as a figure of speech because of some usages of a similar phrase elsewhere in the Bible. That's a strong argument; however, the Hebrew phrase here is a little different than the phrase elsewhere. In addition, with the emphasis on Shem and Japheth literally choosing to *not see* their father's nakedness by walking backwards and keeping their faces away from Noah, it becomes clear that a huge part of the problem was Ham seeing his father's nakedness.

You still might think, "What's the problem with this," and in some ways I wonder if that response reveals that our senses have been dulled to by nudity (or too much skin) in our culture. Keep in mind that in Genesis, after the fall, we're naked and shamed. Shame and nakedness now generally go together. So, when Ham enters his father's tent, he is shaming his father. And we know he's shaming his father because not only does he see his father, but he goes out to tell his brothers about it. Wouldn't the respectful thing to do to not announce it? To add to this, when we read of Shem and Japheth walking backwards with a garment, the ESV simply says "a" garment. But one commentator I read said that it should be translated *the* garment. Meaning that Ham probably took Noah's garment with him to prove to his brothers that their dad was naked!

Now, let me ask you something. Have you ever felt embarrassed by something you've done? Have you ever told someone and then they tell others? How does that make you feel? Now, imagine being a dad. Imagine sinning against the Lord. Imagine before you even get a chance to repent, one of your children has announced it to others?

Ham has crossed many boundaries here. By looking at his father's nakedness and focusing on it, he's cross a boundary of not caring about nakedness. The fact that he doesn't cover his dad emphasizes he doesn't care, and so he reveals a heart of being uncaring towards the shame that comes with nakedness. Yet, Ham's brothers are completely opposite. They respect their father. They don't want to heap further shame on their dad than the shame Noah will already experience in his own sin.

By the way, I think there's a very practical application here for us. No matter what sin someone engages in, it doesn't give us an excuse to sin. I've talked with people before about sexual temptation and they'll speak about how women behave or dress as though that justifies their lust. And I've said that if you were at a party and a drunk, passed out girl is naked on the floor, your first impulse should be to cover her and put her somewhere safe. We care about the shame that nakedness can bring. We care about people. And, we care about that reality no matter who someone is. If it's our family member, our parents, our children, our friends.

So, at this point, we see the sin. Now, let's see

## **2. God's glory is on display through his . . . judgment over sin (vv. 24-25, 28-29).**

**Towards Noah.** Some may say, "Noah didn't get any punishment!" He didn't?! Yes, he did. First off, verses 28-29 say that Noah died. Death is a reminder that we are all still broken and fallen and sin has brought about death. But, in addition to this, the punishment that's going to be revealed to Ham, I believe, is also a punishment that Noah will feel.

Listen, many of you know what I mean when I say that a parent's heart breaks when their child is sinning and experiencing the consequences of their sin. If you are godly at all, you care for your children. I don't think Noah is saying these punishments as some type of vindictive statement because he hates Ham. Noah doesn't have magical powers to make things happen. No. Noah is speaking prophetically here, on

behalf of God. And I can only imagine the pain Noah would have felt to know what was going to happen to Ham.

**Towards Ham/Canaan.** So, let's read about Ham in verses 24-25: **<sup>24</sup>When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup>he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."** <sup>7</sup>

Again, Noah doesn't have magical powers to make things happen. Even the ancient, pagan world would have recognized that a statement like this only has power if there is a power behind the person. Noah isn't speaking on his own accord. Noah is speaking the Lord's prophecy. Canaan will be a servant of servants and will be cursed.

Interestingly enough, Noah say "Canaan." Why? Well, by Moses' dad, moving into the Promised Land, it was the land of Canaan. It was the Canaanites who were to be removed from the Promised Land. And, when Moses writes the Law to Israel, what's so interesting is that we find laws for Israel not to do that reveal what the Canaanites were doing. And do you know what the Canaanites were doing? All sorts of various types of sexual sins. There was no shame with nakedness. Read Leviticus 18 to discover more. And so, the wandering Israelites read about the beginning of Canaan. And, once again, we have a picture of the seed of the serpent. From Noah comes a type of seed of the serpent. But Canaan will be cursed, just like the serpent is cursed from the ground.

Now, just to make sure we understand, Canaanites included Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians. Many great nations comprise Canaan. And you might be tempted to think, "This doesn't look like they're servant of servants! After all, Egypt enslaved Israel. But the reality is that over time, Canaanites were done away with. The final colony of Canaanites lasted until Rome took them out in Carthage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. And yet, Shem and Japheth's descendants remain.

What a lesson this is for us, too. It can seem as though sin is winning, Satan is controlling, and God's children are losing, but God has guaranteed the victory. Will we trust him? This urging to trust must be something the wandering Israelites needed to hear as well. They're going into the promised land, and there's a lot of people they're going to have to fight. Will they trust God who promises to bring Canaan under their rule or will they trust themselves? We know what the Israelites do many times. Sometimes trust, many times distrust and cower in fear. But God promises are always trust. God is always worthy to be trusted by us. His declaration of judgment reveals his glory and provides comfort to those who will turn to him. And we know this because we also see here

### **3. God's glory will be on display through his mercy. . .over sin (vv. 26-27).**

Verses 26-27 state, **<sup>26</sup>He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup>May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."** <sup>8</sup>

Just as Noah's prophecy about Ham is speaking to the people of Canaan, so Noah's statements here are talking about people groups. Shem is from whom the Israelites descend. Abraham will be showing up soon. From Japheth, we get people in the Greek world.

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<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:24–25.

<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:26–27.

But notice that Noah's statement begins with "Blessed be the Lord." This is a statement of praise to the Lord. Why praise God after sin and punishment? Because God is going to crush sin. Just like a type of seed of the serpent comes from Noah, so the seed of the woman continues through Noah, too! And from this seed of the woman (specifically Shem), the nations will be blessed – even Japheth.

This is precisely what we see as history continues. Abraham is promised that through him all the nations will be blessed. The nation of Israel develops. And even certain Canaanites are blessed by aligning with Israel. People like Ruth, Bathsheba, Rahab. Over time, the Canaanites as a people are gone by the power of Rome (Japheth). A type of the serpent has been crushed. But it's just a type because neither the Jews or the Greek-world are perfect. They're sinful and need a Savior. Even though people can say that they're ancestors of Abraham, they lack salvation. Then Jesus comes into the world and states to the Israelites that they shouldn't take pride in physical birth lineage and connection with Abraham because he can make ancestors of Abraham from rocks. Jesus then calls people to trust in him. Why? Because he's the seed of the woman who crushes the serpent. He's the Superior Shemite who will bring the new creation.

And yet, both the Jews and the Gentiles (Shem and Japheth) hated Jesus. They did not care about the shame of nakedness and they placed Jesus on the cross. Yet, on the cross, he became sin, who knew no sin so that in him, anyone who trusts Christ will be made righteous! He rose from the dead, and as we saw last week, Jesus brought the new creation! If you have trusted in Jesus, you are now not only part of a new creation, you also are a true son or daughter of Abraham, according to Galatians and Romans 2. Now, how ought we to live as children of God in a new creation? Well, I can't help but wonder if Paul was thinking about Noah, when he was writing to a community of Christians in Ephesus and he said, "**do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.**"<sup>9</sup>

What does "debauchery" mean? It has the idea of recklessness, and is also many times associated with sexual sins. Paul writes to Christians to say *not* to be drunk. Instead, we are to be filled with the Spirit – empowered by God the Spirit. And then Paul calls us to three things: singing truth to one another, giving thanks to God our Father, and submitting to one another. I want to focus on that last one. The one another's here are Jews and Gentiles. Remember the reading from Ephesians 2 earlier in the service? We were once separated from God's people. Now we are God's people! **Jesus has broken down the walls between nations and ethnicities and brought them all together! Because we are a part of the new creation, we are to join together in unity in Christ – not being divisive, not getting drunk and uncaring towards one another or shaming each other. Not abusing God's gifts from the ground for selfish pleasure. Instead, we are to care for one another and, by the Lord's grace, exhibit the Superior Sethite's character of love and care towards each other.**

With this we can move into communion and not only behold God's mercy through judgment in Noah's day, but God's mercy through judgment in the cross of Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 5:18.