

The Great Flood (Part 8)

The Rainbow and the Curse

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Well, just as I have done for the previous seven sermons on the life of Noah, and the Great Flood, I would like to begin once more in the introductory material of Genesis 6. As I have said so many times, the material in the first eight verses of Genesis 6 is very important. It sets the tone for the whole section of chapters 6 through 9. And, I have made it a part of each one of these sermons from part two until now to bring out something in particular from these first eight verses.

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LOORD.

I know that I touched on this a bit in part 2, however I want to go over this again because this is the first mention of "grace" in the whole Bible, and the law of first mention comes into effect. Seeing how something is used the first time usually sets the tone for how it is used throughout the Bible. Not all the time, but almost always. And for an important word like "grace," it most certainly does.

It will be helpful for us to go into depth on grace as found here, so it can teach us, not about what Noah experienced necessarily, but about the grace that we have received because essentially it is the same grace. So, if we can see it here in Noah's life, maybe we can have a greater appreciation of it in our own life.

Now when we in the church of God speak of grace, we define it mentally as God expressing favor toward us, or as God expressing His goodwill toward us. Mr. Hebert W. Armstrong often used the phrase, "He gave us unmerited pardon." The emphasis has always been on the unmerited portion of it—we do not deserve it.

In Noah's case, God expressed His favor, goodwill, and unmerited pardon just as he did for us. So God literally called Him directly, as opposed to indirectly when He called us through a magazine or radio broadcast. God literally spoke to Noah and called him into His service. He offered him redemption through the forgiveness of his sins. He also offered him deliverance, which is like redemption from sin, but in this case, it was deliverance from the coming world catastrophe.

He also offered him a job and made him His servant. In this capacity, Noah was assigned the job of preparing an ark, and with this ark would save both humanity and

the various animal kinds from the sure annihilation of the great deluge. That was a lot that happened in just those few words, but Noah indeed found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And that is what it all covers—God initiating a relationship with this man, Noah.

God, too, gave him many gifts. His calling was one. I am sure that He gave him His Spirit. He gave him forgiveness. He gave him deliverance, and He gave him a job to do. All those things He did for Noah, and we can see in our own lives that He does the same for us, although maybe not so specifically.

We do have the job to be witnesses before God. We have the job to be witnesses before the world. We have the job to support whatever work God is doing. We have lots of jobs that He has given us to do, besides all the other gifts that He has given us through His grace and favor.

Now the Hebrew word used here for the word grace is "kheen." It is a hard, guttural "h" [kh] with the long "e" sound. It is spelled in a lot of lexicons as only "hen," but pronounced like kheen. This word occurs 69 times in the Old Testament, and in 43 of those times (2/3rds) it is in a phrase of, "find favor in the eyes of," such as, "somebody found favor in the eyes of. . ." Usually it is finding favor in the eyes of a superior. So, in many ways, this word has the idea of someone who has superior rank and/or quality giving someone of lower rank and/or quality a gift that they do not deserve.

This word means, "grace," as we understand it, and "favor." But it can also be applied to physical attributes such as charm or beauty in the positive sense. A woman can have a certain charm or beauty and not do anything; it is the way she holds herself. We say that a ballerina has grace when she dances. This is the same sort of idea that comes along with this word.

I should also mention that this Hebrew word "kheen" is the equivalent to the New Testament Greek word "charis," which is the usual word for Christian grace.

So, the Bible is consistent throughout the whole book in the idea of what God has done. He has given us favor that we really do not deserve. But, it is an overflowing favor, and it is a very good thing.

I want to also mention that this word can describe not only what God does, but people and even places can be seen as being this way if there is a certain charm or beauty about them. Even someone's speech can be gracious. And actions, obviously what God does here, are gracious actions in giving us these gifts. But, it always has the idea of pleasantness and agreeableness. It is something nice, good, favorable, and likeable.

Now, what God did in Noah's case, as He has done in ours, is to exercise divine mercy in the midst of judgment. As we have gone through Genesis 6, we know that God was beginning to exercise a great deal of judgment. He had declared that He would no longer contend with mankind and gave him 120 years from that point. He was pronouncing judgment that was just down the road. And so, after He describes why He is giving this judgment, he gives divine mercy to one man and his family.

What we need to understand here is that this happened during this period or at the beginning of this period. These things all happened at about the same time. He had decided what He would do and who He would do it through. And He chose Noah.

His grace that He gave Noah was a freely given favor toward a simple man. Noah was a simple man. Even though the Bible shows that Noah was righteous—he was just—he was a man who walked with God (the very next verse); he was still a sinner when God called him.

Notice that before he found grace, in verse 8, Noah is only mentioned basically one other time, at the end of chapter 5. And chapter 5 is a genealogy that is out of time; it is set in there so that it introduces who Noah is, and who he descends from. But, it says really very little about his character, except that his name means comfort. His father makes a bit of a prophecy when he names Noah and says that there is going to be comfort through Noah. And it turned out to be true—Noah did bring comfort though maybe not in the way that Lamech had thought he might.

Until this point in his life, Noah was a normal, worldly person. Just like everyone else. Now, obviously, just like Abraham and Moses later on, God was working with him, but Noah probably did not know it. God was preparing him for the job that he was going to do later on; he was not yet called, and he still went his own way up to that point.

Now, I am not saying that Noah was in any way like the nephilim. He was not perverse and corrupt and immoral like they were. But as I said, he was a normal person of that age. God pulled him out of all that and gave him a choice; He called him. And Noah accepted.

So, he was the best candidate for the job. But that was only because of what God had been doing beforehand in preparing him for the job, even though he was not called yet. When God did call him, he was certainly the right man for the job.

I want you to also notice that in this chapter, and in the ensuing chapters, everything good that is said about Noah is said after this point. All the plaudits about how righteous

Noah was occurred after this point.

We have got to get this straight. God did not offer Noah grace because he was righteous; Noah became righteous because God offered him grace.

So, we have gotten the horse before the cart finally. We can see Noah as an individual just like us, because that is how it happened with us. Any righteousness that we have has been developed since our calling, as a result of God's grace. Noah was just like us. He was not some paragon of virtue amidst a perverse and corrupt world. He was a lot like you and me.

But Noah was special. Even though he did not earn grace, even though he found grace in God's eyes, when he accepted that grace, he showed his mettle, and it was tried and true. From that point on (meaning Genesis 6:8), Noah is consistently shown to be a righteous man. He did everything that God commanded him—except the one little scenario we will go over later today. But in every other case, Noah is shown to be a righteous man, a good person who obeyed God in everything.

Genesis 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

And then it is mentioned three more times in Genesis 7. And then, in chapter 8, *Noah did not even leave the ark* until God commanded him to. He was very careful about what he did. He obeyed God in all that God had said to him.

Noah, after his conversion, became a paragon of virtue. We should never get the idea that he was some special person, except to the point that God prepared him before he was called. That is what made him special, and in that case, it is another aspect of God's grace—that God had even prepared him for the job. So, He had given him gifts and skills that he could use for the work that he was going to do for God.

This passage puts the life of Noah into a nutshell.

Romans 6:15-21 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered [sounds like

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Noah, does it not?]. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness [just like before the Great Flood], so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

It was seen very clearly in the flood that those things that those people were doing and all their corruption ended in a very tragic and catastrophic death in the millions and probably billions of people.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Of which coming through the flood was a type.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So the process that Paul describes here tracks very closely with the life of Noah. He was a slave of sin just like us all. Then God called him, and Noah threw off the chains of the bondage of sin, of the world that he lived in, and of Satan and the demons who were wreaking such havoc. But, as soon as he was called and given grace, he grasped with all he was worth both the law of God and the promises that He had given him. He became, then, a slave of righteousness. He did what God said to do. The commands that God gave him were God's law, and he kept those commands in all that God had said. He obeyed.

So, instead of suffering death with the rest of humanity because of sin, he took hold like Paul exhorted: "Let us grasp hold of what is before us." Noah did that. He grasped hold of the gift of life extended by God, and became a servant of righteousness. And what a servant he was. He was a wonderful example to all of us.

Today it is my intention to cover the remainder of Genesis 9 and to finish this series on Noah and the Great Flood. Today we will talk mostly about the sign of the rainbow and

the cursing of Canaan.

We need a bit of recap since it has been almost a month since part 7. Last time, we covered the verses at the end of chapter 8, but primarily we were in the early verses of chapter 9, in which God is speaking to Noah and is resetting the ground rules for the post-Flood world. Things are parallel to Genesis 3. I do not want to go too much into this, but Genesis 9 in many ways parallels the beginning of Genesis.

What we see here overall is that the ground rules are laid down, and then sin occurs. God makes a covenant, God gives promises, God gives the rules, and then man sins. So, we are starting right back over it again. There are a few advantageous things that happen in chapter 9 that are not in at the beginning, and that makes things a bit better and helps things to the point that things will not get so bad for a much longer time period.

The things that are reset were things such as mankind's survivors of the Flood. Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, as well as the animals are commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, just as they were told in Genesis 1 and 2. Man, again, as in chapter 1, is to have dominion over the animals and to dress and keep. Although the wording is not explicitly there, it is implied once again that man is to take charge and to do what is right for the earth. God is just reminding them that this is the way that He wants things to be.

Mankind is specifically told that they could kill animals for food. I do not believe that this leads to a conclusion that they were vegetarians before the Flood. But in this case, explicit authority is given. With this, it is added that they are not to drink the blood because the life is in the blood. God is very adamant about this point that life is precious. Even when you kill for food, you are to pour its life out onto the ground so that it returns to the earth. It shows you just how important life is to God, and how important it should be for us. We are not to take it lightly. That even in the shedding of an animal's life, we should respect that. In doing so, we are more likely not to have bloodlust to go about killing indiscriminately. It makes us think about it should this situation arise.

God also sets up the death penalty for murder. This has led some commentators to believe that there was no such thing before the Flood because when Cain killed Abel, God put a mark on him and said that nobody should kill him. But if someone did, there would be greater retribution on the slayer of Cain. I do not know about that. Personally I believe that situation was just for Cain.

The civilizations that developed before the Flood had to have come up with some sort of

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jurisprudence—some sort of rules of dealing with this sort of behavior. The idea, however, before the Flood is that those rules were not kept very well, if at all. It was more like the wild, wild West rather than a well regulated society. So God puts this idea of there being constituted authority of taking the life of the murderer. It is not stated here who is responsible to do this, rather it only says that whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. Thus, it gives permission for something like the avenger of blood, as happened in Israel later on, where the closest male relative was assigned the job of avenging the killing of the perpetrator of murder or manslaughter. I will not go into how all that has worked out, but the avenger of blood was allowed to kill if the person was caught before he got to the city of refuge.

This was supposed to stop blood feuds and murder in general by putting a deterrent on it. I do not know how well Israel actually followed this.

Anyway, the reason for all these re-setting of the rules is that God wanted to make sure that the post-Flood world would not become as violent as the pre-flood world was. And it did work for a while. As we see 4500 years later, it is still livable; but it is rapidly coming down to being just like it was in the days of Noah. Somehow we tend to live fairly peaceful lives even now.

Please turn to Genesis 9, and we will begin to add some new material.

Genesis 9:8-17 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Once again, as in other places within this narrative, this part of the covenant that God speaks directly about is repeated twice—an initial telling, and then two more times, saying something very similar to the first. As mentioned before, repetition is the best form of emphasis. He is making sure that Noah and his sons, and all of us now, understand how serious and sincere God is about this covenant—to make sure that we understand the terms very well. So, there is much repetition in order to get the point across.

God uses the word "covenant" seven times in these nine verses, so He is really pounding it out to them. This is a covenant and an agreement. We both have parts to play. We are both parties in this. God makes it with Noah, his sons, with all the animals, and with the earth. And that is all repeated too. How many times, I did not count. But, this is how it is. It is not just one time. Just in case we did not hear it, He repeats it again and again so that we know that He is a party, we are a party, the animals are a party, and the earth is a party of this covenant. And God will do it.

He stresses the perpetual nature of the covenant in several different ways, as well. He calls it an everlasting covenant once or twice. He says that it goes for perpetual generations, meaning on, and on, and on. As long as there are men on the earth, this covenant will be in force. And, He says, "Never again," two or three times as well. "Never again will I send a flood."

So we see that not only does He talk about it being perpetual and everlasting in a positive sense, He also gives it in the negative sense by saying, "never again" will He allow this to happen. The repetition stresses His sincerity and thus the covenant's binding nature. God wants us to understand that He will not do this again. He set His rainbow up in the cloud so that we can look at it and remember the promise, just as He looks at it and remembers that He destroyed the earth with a flood. But He will not do that again. He saved a remnant from it and life continued.

We were in II Peter 3 early on in the series, and I would like to go there again. This is the other side of the covenant.

II Peter 3:5-7 For this they [the world] willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water [the pre-Flood world], by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water [which God said will not happen again]. But [Peter shows us a caveat here] the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of

ungodly men.

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

So, there is a caveat in this covenant that God made with Noah. It is in the wording, "He would never again bring forth destruction by a flood." He reserved to Himself the right to bring forth destruction by some other means, and in this case, as Peter says, it is by fire. So, God did not tie his hands when He made this covenant. Water is not the only way to destroy the earth and mankind for their sins. The only thing that God did was to restrict Himself in the manner of destruction—no more flood of water.

So the Day of the Lord—as Peter tells is—the next global destruction will be by a fire so hot and thorough that even the elements will melt. You will want to be a spirit being by that time. Spirit beings do not melt. Everything will be dissolved and evaporated away. I am not sure how far this goes—universal?—I do not know how far out it extends. But, God is certainly going to do something at the very end to cleanse this earth of sin and its effects.

Turn to Luke 3 and we will find something else here. It is an interesting thought to stick in the back of your mind, or even in the front of your mind and thinking. This passage concerns the preaching of John the Baptist, where they wanted to know if he was the Christ,

Luke 3:16-17 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water [similar to Noah]; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

Now think of this: This suggests that this cleansing by fire will come right at the end as God finishes His plan of salvation. He purges His threshing floor and gathers the grain, meaning all the good ones into His barn; then He burns the chaff with a fire so hot that it dissolves everything, and nothing will put it out until there is nothing left to burn. This is also what Revelation 20:14-15 says about the Lake of Fire.

What Peter does in telling us about this, as he continued in II Peter 3, is indicate that this process has already begun. "What manner of person ought you to be, if this judgment has already been started and determined?" (verse 11)

In looking at the life of Noah, I liken this to the 120-year period. And with the coming of Jesus Christ, the clock began ticking again. We are in the countdown. Are we going to be on the "ark," or not? Are we going to be in the Kingdom of God or not when that fire erupts? That is the question. This makes Noah's life even more important to us. He shows how to "build" the "ark"—how to be in the Kingdom of God—by the example of his own life. And what did he do? He walked with God and did **all** that God commanded him to do. He waited for God. These are perhaps the three greatest principles that shine forth from the life of Noah. Like I said, his life is a model and pattern for us to follow with judgment coming swiftly.

Why did God choose a rainbow to be the sign of this covenant? A rainbow is a phenomenon that can be explained scientifically. What happens when one appears in the sky is that the water droplets in the air refract sunlight when the sunlight is coming in at a particular angle to us on the ground. It forms a beautiful arch (or part of one) of color of refracted light always in the red-orange-yellow-green-blue-indigo-violet order. The sunlight refracted through the water droplets in the air indicates that the sky is no longer wholly overcast. It indicates that the sun is shining through the rain shower. It demonstrates that the rain is passing and the sun is returning. This is about the only time that a rainbow can form. It is a sign that the rain is ending. It is the perfect sign for this covenant that God will not destroy the earth by a forty-day and forty-night flood of rain ever again. I am sure that Noah and his sons, and family all thought at the time it was occurring that it was never going to end. It is the perfect sign for them and for us that this covenant is still in force.

God is incredible in the way that He comes up with stuff like this. There could be nothing more perfect than a rainbow to show His grace, mercy, and blessing.

Now, some commentators seem to think that no rainbow ever appeared in the sky before this time, and Noah, his sons, and family would notice and remember this new and wonderful thing.

But that might not be the case. All you essentially need is sunlight, water vapor, and a certain angle for the light to shine through to at least a ring around the sun or moon. The optical laws do all the rest. So, was there a sun before the flood? Was their water vapor before the Flood? Certainly, yes.

So, it is likely that there were rainbows of some sort before the Flood, and God is simply using this existing phenomenon as a sign. The same is true in Exodus 31 with regard to the Sabbath covenant with Israel. The Sabbath was already in effect since at least the recreation in Genesis 1 and 2 with God's sanctification. He used something that already existed—a recurring seven day cycle—as a sign for this covenant. And the covenant with Israel was that He would be with them and sanctify them. Does not the Sabbath day sanctify His people? He used something that already existed: the seventh day.

So, it is very likely that rainbows occurred before the Flood. It is also seen in a word in verse 13 where God says He will "set My rainbow in the cloud." The word "set" is "naton" a common word that means, "to give, to set, or to make," but it does not imply creation of. God did not create the rainbow just for this covenant. It just means that He appointed it for this covenant.

Notice a similarity to something in chapter 8. God said in verse 15, "I will remember My covenant." Do you recall how we went over the term "remember" in part 5? That is the Hebrew word 'zakar' which literally means to remember. However, we must recall that zakar presupposes God's covenant promises, and it refers to God's actions to fulfill His part in it. So when this word is used in terms of a covenant, it means that God is about to fulfill His portion of the terms of the covenant. It is not a mental thing. It is an action. When He remembers, He is going to put His portion of the terms of the covenant into effect.

In this case, it means that when God sees the rainbow, God will continue whatever actions are necessary for Him to keep His end of the bargain. What does He do? He holds back the seas. He said He would not allow another flood to come over the entire land. What does He do? He regulates the weather cycle. He maintains the coastlands. He maintains the aquifers under the land so that their compartments do not collapse and force a huge flood upon the surface, as happened in the Flood. God sees a rainbow, and it reminds Him (as if He needed reminding) for our benefit to sustain things pertaining to water and cataclysmic floods.

So, He is abiding by this covenant to this day. Did you notice that we have not had a worldwide flood since?

Genesis 9:18-19 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark [were there other sons and daughters who did not get on the ark?] were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

This two-verse passage is the introduction to the next passage, which deals with Noah's drunkenness, Ham's disrespectful attitude, and Canaan's curse.

It is difficult to discern what birth order these three sons of Noah really have. In just about every case, they are listed as Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But, in the genealogy found in chapter 10, Japheth is mentioned first, then Ham, and then Shem. This may not mean anything. It is just reversed.

However, there are some people who believe that Japheth was the oldest, because in Genesis 10:21 it seems to say Japheth the elder. But Hebrew scholars tell us that the construction is pointing to Shem being the eldest. Who knows? The Hebrew is ambiguous, really. It is hard to say.

Shem's name means "name." It is more of the sense of some distinction or title. Ham's name means "hot," or "heat." Some people think that this was not his name, but rather given to his family because they migrated to the hotter places of the earth. But, really, all we have to go on is the Bible, and it says his name was Ham, and it means "hot."

So, we have "name," and "hot," and now we have Japheth, which means "enlarged," or "widespread," and again there is an idea that this was a family trait name and not his real name. His family has become very large and is indeed widespread. This is what the Bible calls him. Even Shem's name could have been a description of his family, because so many of his descendants became renown from the Bible's point of view—Abraham, and the fathers; and Moses. Since Moses was the one who wrote this down, Shem obviously had that name before many of the notables of the Bible. And Shem had contact with Abraham. So, it is probably his real name (so I believe).

It says very clearly, here, that the earth's current population came from these three sons of Noah. The families of Shem are the Semitic peoples. But today, people only think of the Jews as being Semitic peoples. The Arabs hate to admit it, but they technically are also Semitic people. Shem, basically, is the father of what has come to be known as the Caucasian peoples, which is not quite correct either, but Shem's descendants make up the bulk of them.

Ham's descendants are primarily the black and brown peoples of the earth. And, Japheth's descendants are of two branches—in Asia, the Orientals; and European in the Slavs, Greeks, and Latins, and various others.

Maybe you noticed something as I went through this, that Japheth has a very large

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range of people. I should note that Ham's and Japheth's descendants have the ability to produce peoples with both lighter and darker skin, as well as various other attributes of the various races. Because if we believe that Shem, Ham, and Japheth were of the same stock, and their wives were the ones who brought along the other racial attributes, then the two of them together by the laws of genetics would produce much variation of each kind. So, Ham's family had a variety of lighter- and darker- skinned descendants, and Japheth's descendants spanned Caucasian to Mongolian appearances.

So, like I said, it is hard to say sometimes what family tribes are from whom. It is an interesting study to be a biblical ethnologist and trace them back. It is not very precise. It is very difficult. It takes a lot of speculation. For instance, Japheth's son Javan is thought to have been the progenitor of the Greek peoples, the Javanese in Indonesia, and likely the Japanese—any or all of them. So, you can see the wide diversity of peoples. So when we try to assign a group of people to a particular progenitor, it is always with a greater or lesser amount of uncertainty.

It is only the line of Israel that we can be certain of because of God's Word.

Now, Canaan is mentioned in this passage also. Is it not interesting that Shem, Ham, and Japheth are mentioned here, but Canaan is included too? Ham is the father of Canaan. This is significant because this introduces him as a major player in what is coming next. He is also mentioned again as Ham's son in verse 22, and then of course Noah has something to say about him in verse 25. So, it would be foolish of us to think that Canaan was not somehow involved in what happens next. The Bible introduces him here for a reason. And it was not just to tell the Israelites later on that this was where they got their enemy, as some commentators think, but rather a real reason for his introduction here.

Genesis 9:20-23 And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

At some point after the Flood, Noah decided to plant a vineyard, and enjoy the fruits of it, and so he did. This is obviously several years after they settled down. By this time, Canaan was probably at least a teenager, maybe even a young man, and he was the

youngest son of Ham, who had four other sons—Cush, Mizraim, and Put. We could probably safely say that this was easily 20 to 30 years after the Flood. Noah was 620 to 630 years old at this time. He was an old man who should have known better than to do what he did.

This was not the first time that somebody made wine. He had obviously brought the seeds or cuttings through the Flood and planted them out into a vineyard. This was probably at a time where they were feeling better about their chances of survival, because you probably would not plant a vineyard first off without making sure that your other crops were stable. I believe that this was a luxury. Later on it became a necessity to have wine.

Noah simply overindulged. He made a mistake. Perhaps we can make excuses for him. Perhaps he was still high up the slopes of Ararat and did not take into consideration the altitude of his dwelling and nearby vineyard, and the bubbly went to his head faster than he thought, and he was out. But, whatever it was, it was a lack of judgment and a sin. He became drunk. He lost his ability to discern, and began to do strange things, because it says that he became uncovered in his tent, which means he was naked.

Think about it. You do not just become naked. You do not sip your bottle of wine, and off come your clothes! No, it just does not happen like that. The Hebrew actually says what happened. This English translation is actually a euphemism. They were trying to protect Noah. The Hebrew says that he uncovered himself in his tent. The verb is reflexive, meaning he did it to himself.

So, he probably became merry singing songs, and who knows exactly how, but he shed his clothes in his tent and was naked, drunk, and then most likely asleep.

Now, why he became naked, we do not know. Some people when they get drunk lose their inhibitions, and become like a little kid.

It is interesting to think—remember we are looking at parallels between chapter 9 and the beginning of the book of Genesis—that when Adam and Eve took of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they became aware that they were naked, became ashamed, and tried to clothe themselves. Here we are right after the Flood, civilization is getting started again, and the main character, Noah, the one expected to be righteous becomes naked and has no shame, because he is drunk. He does not know. He had shame afterward, once he woke up, and discovered what all had gone wrong. But, shame comes into the picture via nakedness nevertheless. Obviously, we are talking

about sin again. Sin was still in the world. Surely this was not the first sin, but it is the one that Moses picked out to show that not only were God's instructions re-stated, but sin was also reset. The conditions that were there in the Garden of Eden or just after the Garden of Eden, had been transferred to the post-flood world. So, sin was abroad once again.

The Flood, for all its destruction and for all its fury, had not stamped out sin. Even the most righteous of men, like Noah, was liable to sin again. So, in effect, Moses is telling us that little had changed. People were still people. Satan was still Satan. God was still God. And sin was still sin. But, there were a few good things that had come about because of the Flood. God had reduced the population and thus the ability for sin to really get out of control and cause terrible waste to the people. The earth had been minimized. He had restarted civilization with a godly foundation through Noah, even though he was the one whose sin is shown here. But, compared to what had happened before, Noah was an extremely righteous man, and things were getting off on better footing than before. But other than that, things were pretty much the same.

Now, let us get to what happens here in verse 22.

Ham sees his father's nakedness. That is an important distinction. Ham saw his father's nakedness. The Hebrew is explicit here in that what Ham did was purely visual. Ham saw that his father was naked. This is not at all like what is written in Leviticus 18 about sexual sins in the holiness code. There, the word is translated uncover, and it shows an action. One uncovered someone's nakedness. But Ham just saw it only.

However, what Ham did was to run to his brothers and tell them about it. And, most commentators seem to think that what he did was to go to his brothers snickering about his father's nakedness, talking about how drunk he had become, and of how you could smell the wine in there. Noah had taken off all his clothes, and Ham was likely making body jokes about it—basically laughing at his dad. At the very least, Ham gossiped about it all.

Proverbs 17:9 He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.

So, if we look at this from this point of view, what Ham was doing was creating dissention, gossiping about it, and separating the other brothers from their father—making him out to be some ludicrous drunk who paraded about naked in his tent.

But Shem and Japheth, to their credit, did not take it like that. They loved their father and respected him enough to want to cover his transgression. And that is exactly what they did—literally. They took a nearby robe, carried it between themselves, and walked backward into his tent putting it over him so that they would not have to see him at all. They did not want to see their father in that situation. They wanted to cover his transgression. And so they did. They were showing him love.

Whereas, Ham was showing a great deal of disrespect and sinning himself. He was not keeping the fifth commandment at all in this regard.

Now, we come to verse 24:

Genesis 9:24 So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.

This is the critical verse regarding Canaan's part in all this. The key is getting the wording correct. When Noah came to, after the affects of the wine had worn off, he saw this robe or blanket on him, and somehow knew what his *younger son* had *done* to him. All these three are very important to this.

Now, "his" is a pronoun that demands an antecedent. What is the antecedent of his? Normally in English, we would think Noah because he is the main noun and that we should apply it to him. And it may be true. But, it may not. It could refer to an earlier person in the context.

I believe it means Noah's son. But, that hinges on what the next one is—"younger son." "Younger son" is literally "his son, the little one." That is the literal translation from the Hebrew. "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his son [the little one] had done to him."

Now, there are three ways to take this. It either refers to his literal son—but if Japheth is his youngest son, that does not fit. However, it could be younger, which would be Ham if Ham was the middle son—he would be a younger son. Another way is that it means literally little son—of differing heights or builds—the little son. I believe that this is the least likely of all of them. A third way is that it is a Hebrew expression that means "grandson." And, this fits best with what he says next in the context, "Cursed be Canaan!"

The next part is in regard to "had done to him." And, remember that what Ham did was

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purely visual. But the Hebrew now implies a physical action in this portion. It was probably some sexual act done against Noah. It was something that Noah realized immediately upon coming to, whatever it was that had happened. He knew it, and knew who it was too. He immediately points the finger at Canaan and curses him. So, somehow Noah knew from all the evidence there at hand, that it was Canaan, not Ham.

What is likely to have happened is that when Ham went out to tell his brothers about what had happened, that Canaan overheard him, went into the tent where Noah was, and did some sort of perverse act upon his grandfather (if he had time to do it). So, Canaan's sin was the worst—that is why he gets the curse.

So Noah says,

Genesis 9:25 Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren."

Noah's curse falls on the real perpetrator of the crime. Ham's sin was reprehensible, but Canaan's was far worse and worthy of a special curse.

The Canaanites were known throughout antiquity, as archeology has shown, as the most sexualized culture that has ever been. They were the ones that were deeply into the fertility cults; they made pornographic idols and statuettes; they had pornographic plays and all sorts of things in their worship; they had temple prostitution; they had cultic abortion, and infanticide; and they were the ones who inhabited those two cities on the plains—Sodom and Gomorrah. So, obviously the curse was well placed.

The phrase, "servant of servants," is a Hebrew figure of speech like "holy of holies," or "song of songs," and it means the lowest of the servants or slaves. This is a tremendously degrading curse. I should also mention that this applies to the Canaanites alone, and not to all the descendants of Ham. It was only upon Canaan.

Genesis 9:26-27 And he said: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant."

So he is knocking Canaan down to size, here. By the way, "Canaan" means "humiliated." So it fits.

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I do not want to spend a great deal of time on this blessing to Shem and Japheth. Charles Whitaker did a good job explaining it in his globalism article, in our July 2001 *Forerunner* magazine, about what it meant for Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem.

But the idea, here, overall, is that Shem's descendants are blessed because of their devotion to the God of Shem. Notice that it said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem." And of course, that same God became the God of Israel, the God we worship today. So, it is clear that Shem was the leader, he was the one who suggested how they should cover up Noah, and it is also lends credence that he was the eldest son. He was, at least, the most like Noah, and he showed that with his subsequent life.

Now, Canaan, due to his sexual appetites, would become subject to the families of Shem and Japheth, and this would be because of God's blessing on Shem as a regional and later world power. And they tended to be that way—having great power because of God's blessing. The reason that God blessed them was that they tended to follow the principles that He had laid out for mankind—mostly lead by the Israelitish people.

Japheth would be blessed with large expanses of land, and very large populations, and his people would be blessed as they adopted Shem's practices—if they would live in the tents of Shem, meaning the overall power and understanding of the people of Shem. In that way, Canaan would serve Japheth's families too.

And that is how the world has turned out, even today. The sons of Shem are the powerful nations of the world, due in large part to their adoption of Christian principles and standards, even if they do not understand them completely. And the descendants of Japheth have prospered in a large part due to their adoption of "western" ways.

And where are the Canaanites? Do you hear about them much any more? (or at all?) Obviously not. If there is a remnant of the Canaanites who may still be living in Palestine, they are among the poorest people in the world.

Genesis 9:28-29 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

Noah lived a long time both before and after the Flood. He watched his family grow tremendously. He had 350 years to watch them spread all over the earth. He lived a full and righteous life, a life we would do well to copy.

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I would like to finish in Hebrews 11:7, because it is a fitting way to end this series about Noah and the Great Flood, because the write or Hebrews says about him,

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

My question is: Will we, being divinely warned about coming events in God's plan, move with Godly fear like Noah to prepare ourselves and our households for God's intervention and prove ourselves the heirs of righteousness which is by faith?

How we ultimately answer this question is up to each one of us.

I hope that after seeing Noah's life we take his example to heart and put it into practice.