

NOAH'S SIN, NOAH'S SONS

Genesis 9:18-29

INTRODUCTION

- There are many examples of athletes who looked certain of victory, but through either lapse of concentration, or over-confidence, stumbled before the finish line and lost the crown that could have been theirs
- All the training and effort over many years spoiled by a momentary lapse of judgment
- This is also true morally in the struggle against sin
- All too often we hear of a Christian who has apparently been faithful in service for many years, who is discovered to have fallen into sin
- Genesis 9 records the resumption of life on earth after the flood
- God made a covenant with his creatures not to destroy the earth again by flood, and gave the token of the rainbow
- The Noahic Covenant was essentially a covenant of *preservation*
 - ✓ Preservation of the planet
 - ✓ Preservation of the people
 - ✓ Preservation of the promise (see 3:15)
- After the record of the covenant, the narrative turns to Noah and his family
- We see here that though the old sinful world had been destroyed, sin was still present because all eight of those souls had inherited Adam's sin-nature
- It was not long before that sin would manifest itself and the consequences of it would set the course of the nations that would come from Noah's sons

I. THE FATHERS OF THE NATIONS (18-19)

A. The three sons of Noah

1. The birth order of Noah's sons is Japheth, Shem, then Ham (see 10:21) but Shem is listed first as he is the preeminent of the three
2. Japheth was born when Noah was 500 years old (5:32), which was 100 years before the flood (7:11)
3. Evidently Shem was 98 years old at the time of the flood, as he had his first son at the age of 100, 2 years after the flood (11:10)
4. These verses make it clear that no one apart from the eight people on the ark survived the flood

B. The descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth

1. Noah's three sons are the fathers of every person and every nation on earth
2. We all descend from these three sons and their wives
3. Just as the pairs of animals that left the ark had all the genetic information to produce the great genetic variation we see within kinds today through adaptation, so too Noah's sons in their genetic make-up contained all the genetic information that has brought forth the great differences we see among the various people-groups around the world
4. Yet we are all of one blood, firstly from Adam, then through Noah
5. All humans, no matter their race, are made in God's image and likeness, are objects of God's common grace, and within the scope of his redemptive plan
6. "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" (Acts 17:25-26)
7. The Scripture gives us no basis for racism – we are all sinners and are all in need of a Saviour
8. Note that it is not racism to point out that other *cultures, religions, and worldviews* are inferior to the Christian religion and to Western Civilisation
9. The history of the world is the history of the relationships between the different tribes and nations in the world
10. From these verses we are shown the beginnings of these relationships between nations, starting with Noah's three sons
11. The differing characters in these sons, seen in the choices they make, set the course of the nations that would flow from them
12. God clearly establishes inherent differences between people, and we should not artificially attempt to conform all people into one homogenous mass as godless systems of socialism and communism do

II. THE FAILURE OF NOAH (20-23)

A. Noah's sin in his latter years

1. These events took place years after the flood, perhaps decades later
 - a. Noah had propagated a vineyard, harvested grapes and fermented wine from them
 - b. Ham by this time had four sons (10:6)
2. In the dark pre-flood world when the battle between light and darkness was fierce, Noah stood firm

3. But now after the battle, here in the new world, in peace and safety and comfort, Noah fell
 4. Noah had endured and overcome so much!
 - a. The scorn of the world
 - b. The labour to construct the ark
 - c. Faithfully preaching righteousness to a wicked world
 - d. Spending a year on the ark
 - e. Re-establishing civilisation on a new earth
 5. Noah is held up as one of the most righteous men in Scripture (6:9; Ezekiel 14:14,20; Hebrews 11:7)
 6. Yet even this righteous man fell and sinned
 7. He was a just/justified man, yet he was not sinless
 - a. A just man can fall, but he is not utterly cast down (Psalm 37:23-24)
 - b. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." (Proverbs 24:16)
 8. None of us are beyond the possibility of falling into serious sin, therefore we must be watchful
- B. The sin of drunkenness
1. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (Ephesians 5:18)
 2. Drunkenness is a work of the flesh, and "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)
 3. Believers are to be sober and watchful, not drunken (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8)
- C. Why should we hold to total abstinence from alcohol?
1. Hebrew & Greek words, *yayin*, *tiros* and *oinos*, are used for both new (unfermented) wine and intoxicating wine, with context determining which
 2. Intoxicating wine itself (not merely intoxication) is repeatedly forbidden (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35)
 3. The long list recorded in Scripture of negative effects that intoxicating wine may lead to: nakedness, fornication, incest, rebellion, impaired judgment, violence, rage, mockery, insensitivity, sinful speech, addiction, staggering, vomiting, stupidity, idolatry, excess, and disinheritance from the kingdom of God

4. Even in small amounts, alcohol impairs judgment, reflexes, reaction time, physical ability, cognitive function – a fact that is objectively proven
5. The negative health effects of even moderate drinking on physical health, particularly the brain
6. The negative societal effects – road deaths, murders, child abuse, wife-beating, sexual immorality, poverty, chronic disease, etc. Anything which causes such incalculable evil and suffering should have no place in a believer's life
7. The various admonitions in the New Testament to soberness, alertness and watchfulness which are violated by alcohol
8. The many examples in Scripture of men who erred and sinned through wine – Noah, Lot, Nabal, Elah, Benhadad, Ahasuerus, Belshazzar, etc
9. Kings and priests are forbidden wine
10. The principle of avoiding anything that may lead to sin, even if that activity may not be sinful in itself
11. The high likelihood that a believer who imbibes will cause others to stumble by their example

D. Noah's nakedness

1. Nakedness is a recurring theme in Genesis
 - a. Adam and Eve in their unfallen state were naked and not ashamed
 - b. When they fell they were aware and ashamed of their nakedness and attempted to cover themselves
 - c. God himself provided them clothing, showing he expects man to cover his body
 - d. Here Noah's sin of drunkenness led to his nakedness which Ham used for his evil intentions
2. Scripture repeatedly connects drunkenness with nakedness (Lamentations 4:21; Habakkuk 2:15)
3. Noah was uncovered in his tent – this can be understood as “uncovered himself”, perhaps indicating not mere carelessness through wine, but a wilful breach of modesty

E. Ham's wickedness

1. Ham “saw” his father's nakedness – this was not a mere glance, but a considered gaze
2. Ham's sin lay firstly in rejoicing in what he saw, and secondly in reporting it with malice to his brethren

3. Ham felt a new superiority over his father
 - a. He could diminish his father's honour in the eyes of others
 - b. He could dismiss his father's authority over him
4. There are various suggestions as to a possible depraved act Ham committed upon his father, due to the wording in the text, and the severity of the curse
 - a. That he castrated Noah so that he could bear no more sons
 - b. That he sodomised Noah
5. But Ham did not "uncover" the nakedness of Noah, which is a euphemism for sexual immorality (see Leviticus 18), he "saw" his nakedness
6. In that culture to see the nakedness of another, particularly of an honourable person, was a grave offence
7. Ham is a picture of a religious hypocrite
 - a. He likely assisted his father to build the ark
 - b. He endured with the rest of his family the scorn of the world
 - c. He boarded the ark with his family and was saved from the flood
 - d. He participated in family worship
 - e. Yet he was wicked
8. Like Lot's wife whose heart remained in Sodom even as she fled the city with her husband; so Ham's heart was in the old world, that evil, corrupt, wicked, violent world, though he was in the new world with his family
9. He had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5)
10. He was like a whited sepulchre, which appeared beautiful outward, but within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness (Matthew 23:27)
11. But in due time his true nature manifested itself in this display of contempt for his father
12. So it is in the church, the tares are among the wheat
 - a. This was true of the first church
 - b. It was true of the churches in the New Testament
 - c. It is true of churches today
13. Eventually however the apostate reveals himself, the dog returns to its vomit, the sow to the mire

14. Such ungodly men delight in the sins of the saints
 - a. They do this because it makes them feel justified in their own sins and rejection of Christ
 - b. They look for any inconsistency, any slip in the walk of a Christian, and when they find it, they say, "Aha, I knew they were a fake!"

F. Shem and Japheth's righteousness

1. Ham gleefully told his brothers that they too might scorn their father with him, yet they were of a different character
2. In their actions they showed honour for their father and a desire to uphold their father's dignity
3. Charity/love rejoices not in iniquity (1 Corinthians 13:6)
4. But the wicked "have pleasure" in the sins of others (Romans 1:32)
5. The ungodly, who hate righteousness, and hate the righteous, rejoice when they see a righteous man stumble, as this justifies their own sin
6. But the godly do not rejoice when others sin, rather they grieve for them, are discrete in their dealing with it, not publishing it abroad, but rather seeking to restore them (Galatians 6:1; Proverbs 10:12; 17:9)

III. THE FORETELLING OF NOAH (24-27)

A. A curse on Canaan

1. Upon awaking and know what Ham had done (possibly by being informed by his brothers), Noah proceeded to pronounce a curse upon Ham's son, Canaan
2. Why is Canaan cursed, not Ham?
 - a. Canaan may have joined his father in mocking Noah, even taking it further
 - b. Noah may have known Canaan's wicked character, inherited from his father, and taken to deeper levels of wickedness, and he specifically cursed him as the chief wicked man of the new world
 - c. Even as before the flood there was a godly in and an ungodly line, so to we see this similar pattern taking shape, with Canaan becoming the Cain of the post-flood world
3. Canaan's curse was servanthood
4. "These descendants were not cursed because of what Ham did; they were cursed because they acted as their ancestor had." (Allen Ross)
5. The subsequent history of Canaan shows that his people were brought under the subjection of Shem's and Japheth's descendants who at different times conquered the land of Canaan

6. Note also that Egypt is called the “land of Ham” (Psalm 105:23), who, like the Canaanites, were arch-enemies of Israel and came under divine judgment

B. Blessing on Shem

1. Noah shows that the LORD is Shem’s God and therefore Shem is blessed
2. This is the line from which Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, and eventually Jesus came
3. The faith and godliness of Shem elicited this prophetic blessing from Noah that would flow down to his descendants for thousands of years to come
4. How far reaching, for good or evil, are our lives, choices and actions!
5. They do not merely affect us, but those who come after us

C. Enlargement on Japheth

1. Japheth’s descendants, including Europeans and Russians, would be enlarged in their posterity, possessions, in enterprise and empire
2. Japheth would also dwell in Shem’s tents, share in Shem’s blessings, particularly the spiritual blessings from Shem’s God
3. From Japheth came the European peoples, where the gospel found great acceptance, and in this way Japheth has dwelt in the tents of Shem
4. Most of us are descendants of Japheth and if you belong to Christ, you are “dwelling in the tents of Shem”
5. Japheth conquered and brought Canaan into subjection when the Romans conquered the Phoenicians, who were descendants of Canaan in Sidon in northern Israel and in Carthage in northern Africa

IV. THE FINISH OF NOAH’S LIFE (28-29)

A. Noah’s epilogue

1. Noah lived for an additional 350 years after the flood
2. Only two of his predecessors lived longer, Jared (962) and Methuselah (969)
3. Abraham was 28 years old when Noah died
4. Noah lived to see the rise of Nimrod and the confusion of the languages at Babel.

B. Noah’s exemplary life

1. Noah’s life was one blessed by God’s grace

2. The grace of God in Noah was evidenced by his faith, obedience, piety and perseverance
3. Noah shows us that there is “not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)
4. Yet God’s grace is greater than our sin and will preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom
5. Now Noah is in the presence of his Saviour, resting from his labours

CONCLUSION

1. Many start well, but few finish well
 - ✓ Moses sinned in the latter years of his life by disobeying God, and was not allowed to enter the promised land because of his disobedience (Numbers 20:7-13)
 - ✓ David sinned in the latter years of his life by committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed (2 Samuel 11:1-27)
2. As time draws on, we must be on guard against complacency in our Christian walk
3. The devil knows our weaknesses and is ever ready to attack when we are vulnerable
4. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)
5. A sure test of character is how you respond to the sins of others
6. If you *rejoice* in evil, then you are evil
7. If you *grieve* over evil and seek to restore those who fall, then you are righteous
8. “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” (Psalm 119:136)
9. How you respond to evil will affect not only you, but those around you and those who come after you
10. No person, society or nation that rejoices in sin will be blessed
11. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34)
12. May we not only be on guard against sin in our own lives, but be always ready to seek out those who have fallen into sin, and bring them back to the way of holiness through repentance
13. “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20)