

## Morals Matter: Cursing and Blessing

Genesis 9.18-29

It's the 'last chapter' in the story of Noah, and he's looking good: In a hopelessly wicked world, Noah is a hero! His faithfulness to God saved life on the earth. But as we're about to build a statue in honor of him, he turns up drunk and naked...and sin bears its awful fruit.

Two Responses to Decadent Behavior (9.18-23)

- Noah gets drunk: *Sin is crouching at the door...*
- Ham's immorality: *O be careful little eyes what you see...*
- Shem and Japheth's morality: Modesty covers shame

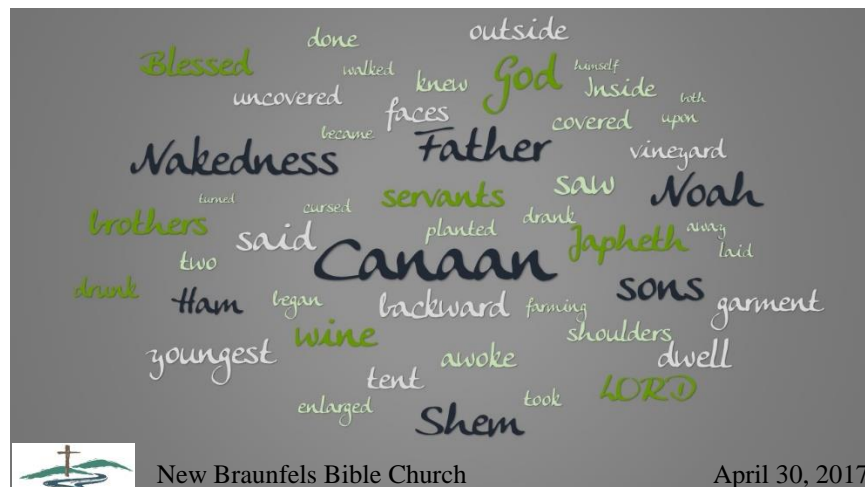
Curse and Blessing: Actions have Consequences (9.24-29)

- Curse on Canaan (Ham's son): Immorality and slavery
- Blessing on Shem: *Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem!*
- Blessing on Japheth: *May Japheth live in the tents of Shem.*

A Principle...and a Plan (God begins to 'show His hand')

*Principle: God blesses the righteous, curses the immoral.*

*Plan: A first glimpse to the future reign of the greatest Shemite.*



## Digging Deeper

1. A key question when coming to a story like this is, *Why is this included in the Bible?* On the surface, it's an isolated, bizarre event, yet it has huge ramifications for future history. Consider that Genesis was written to the new nation of Israel as it faced the conquest of the land of Canaan, the land which God had promised to them. The Canaanites – descendants of Ham's son Canaan, stood between Israel – descendants of Shem, and their homeland. Imagine you're an Israelite in that day: What affect might it have on you?
2. Sometimes we think of great men and women of God as if they are almost immune to sin. *Not so!* Noah is a righteous man (he is enshrined in the Hall of Faith; Heb. 11.7), yet he gets drunk and naked here! What other Old Testament 'saints' can you think of who had 'feet of clay' at some point in their lives?
3. Ham's sin – he *saw the nakedness of his father* – seems far less heinous than Noah's, yet Ham's descendants are cursed! Why? Consider: The Hebrew verb translated "saw" (v22) is רָאָה (rā'â), and means 'to look at (searchingly)', not just accidental seeing. This is homosexual voyeurism, both perverse and dishonoring. Contrast the actions of Ham with those of Shem and Japheth. Today, sexual depravity comes at us from every side, and we may think of 'merely viewing' nakedness as a relatively minor thing. What does God think of it? Meditate on Psalm 101.1-4.
4. After cursing Canaan, Noah blesses Shem and Japheth (26-27). This blessing foreshadows the future of Israel, and Gentiles, too. Shem's descendants are Jews; who are Japheth's descendants? (Do a little research.) Who is the greatest 'Shemite'? What did He do? What future blessing for Gentiles does Noah's blessing of Japheth (27, *may he dwell in the tents of Shem*) point to (see Gen. 12.3c; Rom. 11.11-24; Eph. 2.11-22)? A Hebrew scholar put it this way: *We are all Japhethites dwelling in the tents of Shem.* Reflect on the *deep* roots of God's grace, which reach all the way back to Shem and Japheth, and reach all the way to our lives today, and the coming Millennial Kingdom!