

GENESIS

9:1-29

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 24th September 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Introduction

This morning we are going to study Genesis chapter 9, which unsurprisingly continues on from the closing verses of chapter 8 in describing the first things that took place after Noah's flood. In those verses we saw Noah's good character continue (as he brought a free-will offering to the Lord), and we *read* God's promise to never again destroy every living thing as indeed He had done in the flood — something that is expanded upon in the middle of this next chapter.

Overview of chapter nine

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- **v1-7** — The sanctity of life (Repopulation & responsibility)
- **v8-17** — God's covenant (Reassurance & reminder)
- **v18-29** — Noah's drunkenness (Reproach & repercussions)

Taking a birds eye view of chapter 9, the first 7 verses largely deal with the sanctity of life — especially human life — which sadly, is under attack (intentionally or not) in our day. In the middle of the chapter, verses 8-17, we learn more of God's promise made to Noah, and how the rainbow was to be a reminder of that. And then the last 11 verses mainly record Noah becoming drunk, and the aftermath of his sin. A blight on the legacy of what otherwise was a good example of a godly man.

For those who find alliterations a helpful way of remembering details, we can remember the sections to this chapter as *repopulation and responsibility* (in verses 1-7), *reassurance and reminder* (in verses 8-17) and *reproach and repercussions* (in verses 18-29). Or another way of remembering this is *Government, Grace and Guilt* (as Warren Wiersbe put it).

Chapter nine

So, let's get into our study of this chapter — but not without the reminder that what we read here was written for our learning, as Romans 15:4 tells us. So, we need to carefully consider how we apply this to *our* lives, starting with verse 1:

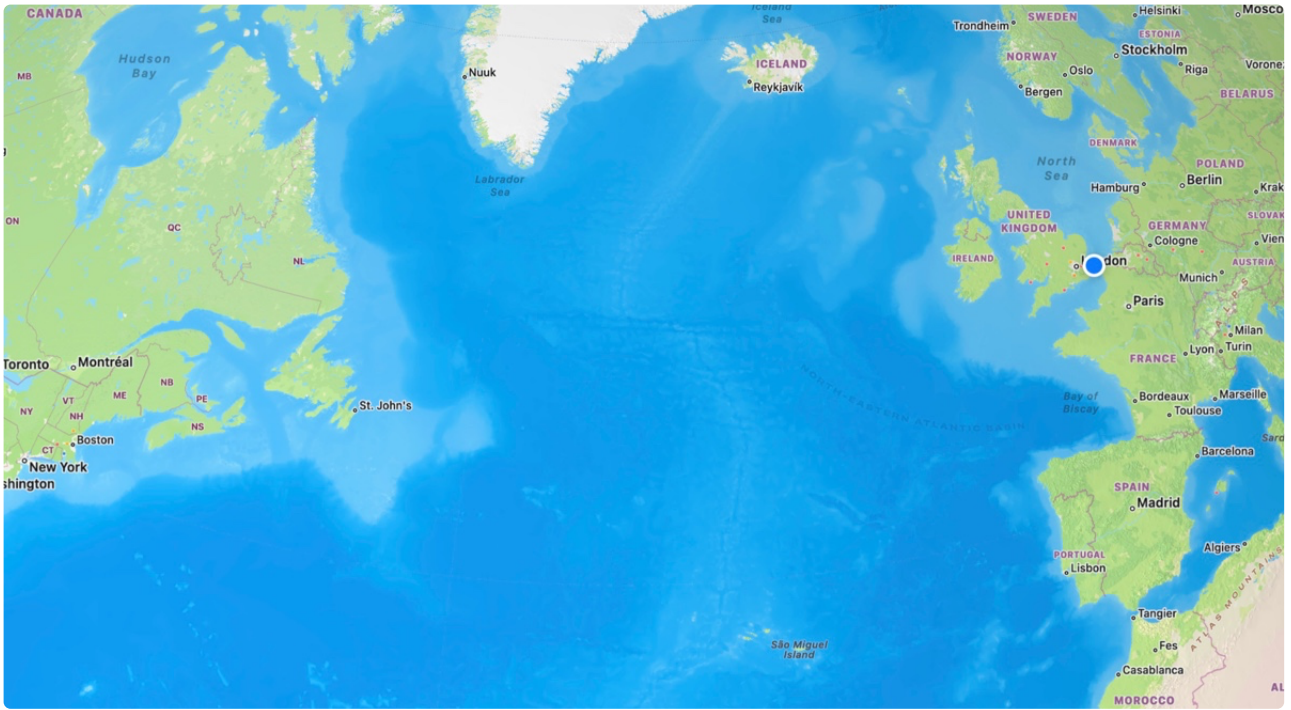
Genesis 9:1

So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

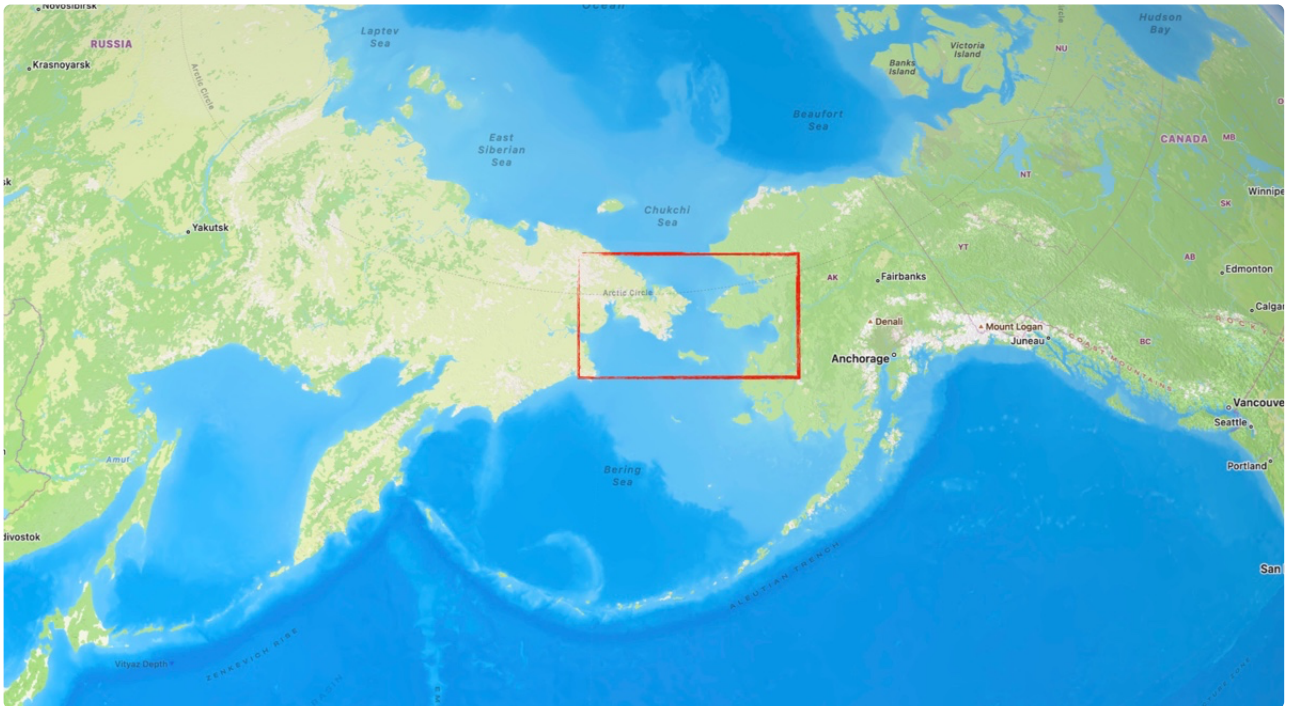
First, then, much like the animals that came off the ark were told to multiply abundantly, Noah and his sons were told to be fruitful and multiply. This was the most necessary of things following the flood, for these were the last 8 people alive on the earth; Noah and his wife, and their 3 sons and their wives. And Noah and his wife had no more children. And so it was down to these 3 couples — if they had chosen not to have children, that would have been it for the human race (indeed, we would not be alive today). But more than that, there would have been no line of descendants through to the Saviour, and so there would have been no hope for themselves or those who lived before them to have their sin paid for by Christ.

But second, we read that they were instructed to fill the earth, and we'll see in the following chapters how mankind started spreading out very quickly. When it comes to animals, Bible critics like to suggest that the Bible doesn't account for how various animals ended up around the world, but certainly it would not have been a surprise to see animals spread out just as mankind did. Some even taken by them to where they settled. And the potentially different and changing climate in the years after the flood could have allowed movement across dry land such as is not possible today - whether through changing sea levels, or an ice age following the flood.

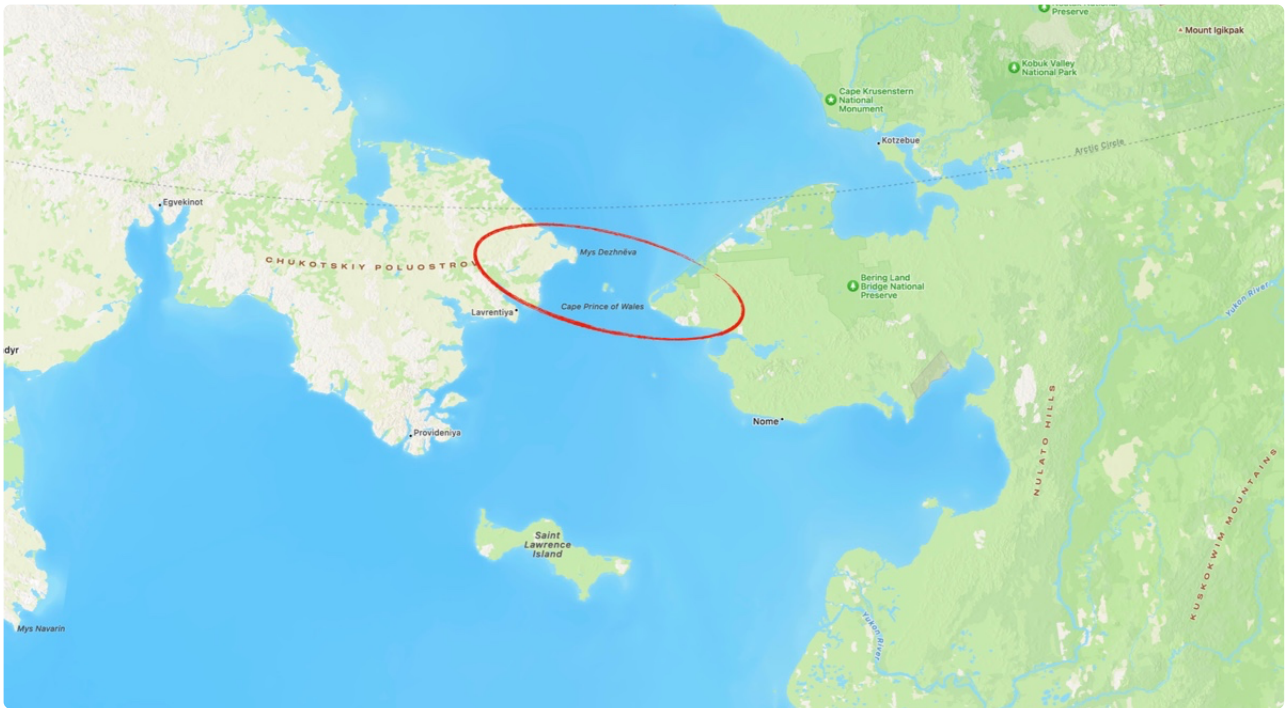
One possibility, that isn't a big stretch of imagination is the potential route of migration to the Americas...



Of course, when we look at it from our usual view of the world (America on the left, Russia on the right) we see how vast the Atlantic is — hopping from Europe to the UK to Ireland to Iceland to Greenland to Canada is no trivial thing (in fact, it was insurmountable for many generations).



But when we look at the closeness of Russia to Alaska, we see how close these continents are (and perhaps understand a little more of the tension between these two nations). Zooming in to the red box here, we can see this area...



...(known as the Bering strait) is only around 50 miles wide at its narrowest point, and only 90m deep at it's deepest point (with an average depth of 30-50m). The plausibility of this once being a crossing point is accepted by many secular scientists too.

We could dig deeper, but I don't want to get sidetracked. The important point to note is that we can trust what we read in the Bible, and when it says that all mankind and all animals that we see today are descended from those that were on the ark, we can believe that with confidence. And indeed that's one practical thing we can take away from this verse.

But consider the parallel that is going on here too. Noah, his sons, and their wives, had been saved — they had heeded God's command to enter in through the only door of salvation that was the door of the ark, and now, as they began this new life they were to multiply. And it's the same for us spiritually — we have been saved through the only door of salvation, that is Jesus, and now we are to multiply; that is, we are to make disciples. We are to lead others to Christ. This is the great commission. It ought not be the great omission. Just as Noah and his son's were the only ones in their generation to repopulate the earth, so this generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on the earth (as the late Keith Green put it).

Now, as we move into verse 2 we see that at this moment, in this new beginning for mankind, there is both repetition and expansion of what we read in Genesis chapter 1. Back there we *read*:

Genesis 1:27-30

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.

And in that there are four key points: Mankind was made in God's image. Mankind was to be fruitful and multiply. Mankind was to have dominion over all animals. And, mankind, and animals, were given every green herb for food. And each of these is repeated in some way in the opening verses of this chapter. So let's read on. Verse 2 says:

Genesis 9:2

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.

So then, mankind's unique position is re-enforced, having previously been told (as we just *read*) that we were and are to have dominion over all animals. This doesn't mean we are to treat animals poorly, though mankind has a horrid history in doing that, but rather it is stating that animals are not on an equal footing with mankind. And now, in *addition* to what we *read* in chapter 1, we now read:

Genesis 9:3

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

So, whereas before the flood man had a vegetarian diet, there was now permission at least, if not even instruction to eat meat. And indeed every living thing was on the table, so to speak. It wasn't until later on that more dietary laws were given as part of the law given to Moses. And note that it is God that instituted this, so don't let someone tell you that it's more spiritual to have a vegetarian or vegan diet, as many who hold fast to eastern religions say, of whom Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

So then, you have freedom to eat steak, and bacon sandwich's, and fried chicken. However, don't forget what we looked at just a few months ago in our study of Romans, for we are not to eat meat to prove a point that we can. We're to be sensitive to others. If someone's conscience convicts them to not eat meat, or a certain type of meat, then don't be insensitive to that, or even obnoxious about your freedom to do so. But rather, approach the matter in love, remembering these words in Romans chapter 14:

Romans 14:14-15

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

And furthermore, there was with this permission to eat meat, a restriction to follow also. We read:

Genesis 9:4

But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

So then, it seems very clear here that we are not to eat meat with blood still in it — that it should be drained out, or cooked out. And I do think that poses a question as to whether we should eat super rare steak, or black pudding and so on. It bothers me not to question that, because I have no appetite for such things. The idea of eating food made with pig's blood seems offal in every way to me. But if I were inclined, I don't think my conscience would allow me to based on what seems a very clear command of scripture. While further mentions of this restriction in Leviticus and Deuteronomy were part of the law, this command in Genesis 9 pre-dates the law of Moses. So if you were to ask me what my opinion is on the matter, I would say you shouldn't eat meat with blood still in it — because that's what God told Noah at the very first point meat was permitted for food.

Looking at various Bible commentaries on this verse, a couple of possible reasons are given as to why God may have specifically said this. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's commentary states that *"The sole intention of this prohibition was to prevent these excesses of cannibal ferocity in eating flesh of living animals, to which men in the earlier ages of the world were liable."*

However, I think more on point is Matthew Henry's notes that say: *"The main reason of forbidding the eating of blood, doubtless was because the shedding of blood in sacrifices was to keep the worshippers in mind of the great atonement; yet it seems intended also to check cruelty, lest men, being used to shed and feed upon the blood of animals, should grow unfeeling to them, and be less shocked at the idea of shedding human blood."* That's something to think on.

And talking of human blood, this passage continues...

Genesis 9:5-6

Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

That is, if an animal or man were to kill another man, then their blood would be required for the life that they took. And I think we have very little issue with the first part of that, even today. For even the ardent PETA member is likely to agree that a dog who kills a child should be put down. And I imagine anyone standing in front of a hungry bear or crocodile would willingly use a rifle to save their own life, or that of another human, without hesitation.

But what do we do with the later part of verse 5 and 6? Well, certainly murder is off limits. Nothing has changed there since creation, for it was wrong when Cain killed Abel. Though at that time of course, Cain was protected from his own life being taken by mankind in revenge. But given what we read in scripture, we cannot say that capital *punishment* has been wrong in all cases — for God Himself instituted it here in Genesis before the law (as well as later giving that mandate to Israel).

Why? Not for man to take revenge, but that man would govern himself. That He would take responsibility for His actions, and for governing the actions of others. That the world might not descend into complete chaos. And one argument given for capital punishment is that without it as the highest form of sentencing for the most abhorrent crime of killing another human, then not only does the punishment or deterrent for such a significant crime become weaker, but consequently so must that for every smaller crime. This isn't a simple matter.

One of our fundamental problems is that we like to draw our own boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour — either nationally, or individually — instead of letting God draw the lines. Indeed, what we think of as a small sin, is still significant enough to have required Jesus to die on the cross in our place. And thus it's possible that we are too lenient on the abhorrent crime of killing another human being. Indeed, we see God takes this very seriously because He created mankind in His image.

Given what we are nearly all used to here in our country, which withdrew the death penalty in 1965, the thought of capital punishment can make us feel uneasy. Indeed, I've *not* grown up in a country where it is a reality. And, like I'm sure all of us, I have reservations at the idea, given the horrible ramifications of miscarriages of justice. You can't undo a death sentence that has been carried out. But I think we have even more at stake — for at the heart of this question is the sanctity of life, which we absolutely should be standing firm on. For there are those in this country who are actively pushing for euthanasia to be legalised, and as of 2021 there are close to 600 unborn babies murdered in England and Wales alone *each day*.

If we want to deal with injustice, we have bigger battles to fight right now than can be won by capital punishment. The battle is over the heart of man, which is incurably wicked. We need a generation that is willing to share the gospel.

Now, having spoken of the value of life, God continues speaking to Noah and his sons, returning to His earlier command, saying:

Genesis 9:7

And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it."

And as we'll see next week, there were many big families that followed. Noah had at least 16 grandchildren, and there would those such as Jacob later on, who had 13 children himself.

As we enter verse 8, we see God returns to another point that He made at the end of chapter 8, and that is of His promise to not destroy every living thing as He had done in the flood. This promise sometimes being called the Noahic covenant, which is first spoken of in chapter 6. We read:

Genesis 9:8-11

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."

So while in chapter 8 the promise was not to curse the ground or destroy every living thing as had been done, here in chapter 9 that promise is further clarified, with God saying that never again would there be a *worldwide* flood. Of course, if this was a local flood, then God has clearly broken his promise many times over. But the Bible makes it clear that this was global, and not to be repeated — which must have been such reassurance to Noah, especially as future rain showers arrived. But furthermore, God would establish a sign through which which Noah might remember God's saving grace, and assurance that judgement of that nature would never be poured out again.

And we read:

Genesis 9:12

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:

So then, this wasn't just for Noah, but for us too! We read on:

Genesis 9:13-15

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.

That is, the simple but beautiful rainbow that is caused by rays of sun on drops of water in the sky, would be a reminder that God would not judge the world by water again, that there would be no worldwide flood, no matter what climatologists may theorise. Verse 16...

Genesis 9:16-17

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."

What an incredible thought, that when we look at a rainbow, God is looking at it too and remembering His covenant with Noah and us. But furthermore, notice that God says *He* will look on it — not necessarily Noah. That is, God is looking at every rainbow we *don't* see, and *still* remembering His promise to us. How good it is that God's continued mercy and grace doesn't rely on us!

This sign, of course, isn't the good news itself. It's merely a reminder of the good news. And today, not only do we have that same reminder in the rainbow that God will not judge the world again by water, but we also have the reminder of communion, that as we share in the bread and wine, so they represent something far, far greater — which is *our* salvation through Jesus Christ.

Genesis 9:18-19

Now the sons of Noah who went out of 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.

As mentioned a week or two ago, Shem was not the eldest, but is always listed first — for it was through him that the line to Jesus would come. That is, it was through him that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and ultimately the nation of Israel came. Which is where we get the term semites, and anti-semitism (which is hatred against the Jews). And we also see noted here that Ham was the father of Canaan — which is important for us to know when we get to verse 25.

And it is to these three men, and ultimately Noah, that the whole of mankind can trace their roots. That's not *complex* to understand, but so very *important* to. For we are all one race — the human race. Not gradually evolved from monkeys to more and more human like creatures (with some more advanced than others), but created in the image of God as mankind. And given the importance of this, I want to be clear; there are not many races, as is often spoken of, but just one. Which means there should be no racial division between us, indeed no racism at all.

We should note what we read in Acts 17:

Acts 17:26-27

And He has made from **one blood** every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

If only this were noted, explained, and taught more often in churches. If only Christians — including us — would stand up when we see any form of racism, for we are all of one blood. The colour of our skin is just that — it is simply the amount of melanin produced, which is the pigment that gives us our diverse range of colours. While cultures vary greatly around the world based on our particular *location*, the *visible* differences between us are literally only skin deep. That is what the Bible teaches, and there is no justification for racism to be found in it. Indeed, any time people or nations are spoken ill of, it is their *behaviour* that is in question (and not the colour of their skin).

In fact, as Christians we ought to be especially clear on this matter, for we read in Galatians 3:

Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Likewise, we read in Colossians 3:

Colossians 3:8-11

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

As Christians, there should be zero divide between us at all — whether due to skin colour, culture, nationality, employment status, marital status, age or whatever.

Contrast that to worldly thinking — where we have seen Hitler and his Aryan master race, and his persecution of Jews. Or evolutionists in the 1800s who hunted down Australian aborigines in an effort to find the missing link. Or Darwin and his view that (and I quote) “negros” and native Australians were closer to gorillas than the rest of mankind. We cannot love others as ourselves and still be racist — that would be an utter contradiction. You can’t do both.

Now, having reminded us of who Noah’s sons were, and that Canaan was Ham’s son, Moses now records this next event:

Genesis 9:20

And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

To this point, we’ve only heard good things of this man, Noah. Each time God commanded him to do something, he did it. Indeed, he’d just spent the previous 100 years building the ark, before spending a year or more on it again in obedience to God. He is even described as a preacher of righteousness in 2 Peter 2:5. Yet we’re about to read about a moment where he dropped his guard.

Perhaps he thought that he was through the biggest trial, and he could take it easy. Perhaps, while being in a happy season, he eased off spending time with the Lord. After all, the flood was over, grandchildren are soon to be born, he’s got a nice vineyard, and the earth is getting back to some level of normality, without any of the wicked men around that lived before the flood. Yet it’s here that we see his character fail. And that should be a warning to us — for it’s often the times of ease and plenty, that we take our eyes off the Lord. That we stop reading our Bibles, and stop spending time in prayer. Let us take note of what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Don’t be so foolish as to think you can’t trip up and sin this day, or any day. For we read of this good man, Noah:

Genesis 9:21

Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

I don’t think it is reasonable to create an excuse for Noah, saying that no-one had ever been drunk on wine before — for there had been 1600 years of history prior to this. Nor is it reasonable to say that getting drunk was OK because the Bible hadn’t yet recorded God say “do not get drunk” — for neither did it record God saying “do not murder” before Cain killed Abel, but that was also sin.

Rather, Noah must have dropped his guard, and yielded to sin. And what a shame — having lived his life so well. Oh, how those of us who have walked with the Lord for years should be diligent to keep close to Him to the end, that we might finish well, noting what we read in 1 Corinthians 9:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

So let us run our race well all the way to the end. Remembering that we are always less likely to sin when we're close to the Lord. That is, when we're in His Word, and when we're in prayer.

Now, Noah was drunk and uncovered in his tent, and we read on:

Genesis 9:22

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

This will turn out to be significant, for unlike his brothers who protected the modesty of their father, Ham goes and tells *literally* every other man on the planet.

Genesis 9:23

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.

In other words, they restored Noah's modesty. They had the right attitude, seeking to love their father, rather than mock him. And it's an attitude we should seek to emulate. We read in Proverbs:

Proverbs 17:9

He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

There are of course times where we are to publicly deal with someone's sin, but generally in the first instance, if we speak to anyone about it, it should be that individual, that we might restore them in love, not throw them under the bus or mock them for their behaviour.

We read on:

Genesis 9:24

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

Was it just from the fact that he was covered, or that he was told? We don't know, but evidently he was greatly upset by Ham's attitude. And what follows next, may be surprising:

Genesis 9:25

Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren."

That is, it wasn't Ham that was cursed by Noah here, but rather his son, Canaan. And that may seem unfair on the surface, as if Noah was saying "As you my son have brought me shame, so will your son".

But perhaps this is in part prophetic of Noah, for as we go through the rest of scripture we see how the Canaanites were a troublesome people to say the least — in fact they were the ones through which giants entered the world once again (not because they were forced, but by choice), as Satan tried once more to wipe out the line through to the Messiah, to Jesus.

The warning I think we should take from this, is how *our* sin has repercussions beyond what we ever expect. Jon Courson notes how this is so very similar to that which we see in families today:

Ham was the one who exposed his dad's sin. Yet it would be his son, Canaan, who would experience the repercussions. We see the same thing today when the son of an alcoholic grows up to be an alcoholic himself, when the son of a child abuser grows up to, himself, abuse children. This is one of the great tragedies of sin. Toss a pebble into a pond, and the circles will grow ever wider. The same is true of sin. The consequences and ramifications grow to include many more people than we ever guess.

Jon Courson

As for the other brothers, we read:

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."

In this we see a glimpse of the special relationship that Shem's descendants, specifically the Jews, would enjoy with God. And how God would bless Japheth's descendants, through whom we see much of government, science and art were developed as history unfolded.

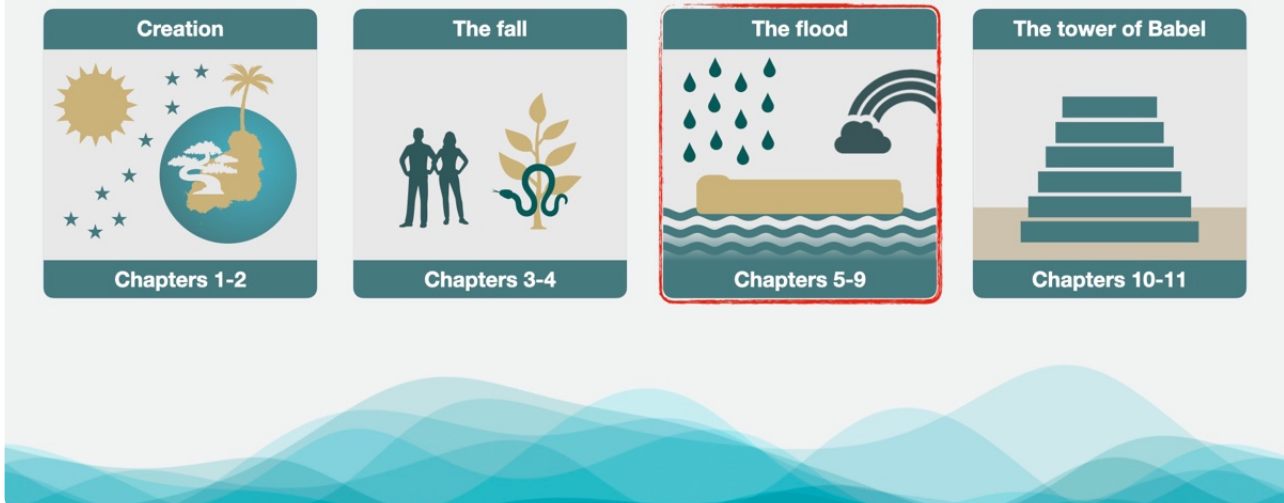
What is recorded of Noah after this incident? Well, nothing more in scripture. For we read:

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.

We see then, that Noah would have been around for generations after the flood, possibly as far as Abraham's lifetime, and would have been able to relay not only what happened in the flood, but what happened before it, with accuracy — with his own father, Lamech, having been alive at the same time as Adam.

The events of Genesis



With Noah's death, we get to the end of not only this chapter, but the third of 4 major events recorded in the book of Genesis. And next week we'll get into chapter 10, which builds up to the 4th major event, the Tower of Babel — with the detail on that recorded in chapter 11.

CONCLUSION

As we look back at this chapter, there are many examples to learn from, and foreshadows of the future to make us think.

But there are three things that stand out to me, and that is not permission to eat burgers, but first, the sanctity of human life. How precious it is. How precious God views it. And how desensitised we get when it seems so often we hear of murders on the news. Life is precious.

Second, God's promises are sure. God said that He will look on each rainbow and remember His covenant with Noah, and us. His promise is not dependant on us. What good news!

And third, the example of Noah sits on my heart... am I so foolish to think that obeying God's commands in the past, or preaching righteousness today, are somehow going to prevent me from sinning in the future? This reminds me how I still need Jesus in every moment. How I need to walk closely with Him, in His Word, in prayer, in fellowship with Him — if I am to finish well.

Application questions

So then, I encourage you to make a note of these questions and ask them to yourself.

- Do you advocate for the sanctity of life? If not, who will?
- Do you appreciate how sure your salvation is? Do you praise God for it?
- What are you doing to finish your race well?

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