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INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Genesis 2011 - Lesson 9C

Chapter 9:24-29

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- Today we move on from the Flood story and transition to the next *toldat* or genealogy in Genesis
 - But first we have some unfinished business in the family of Noah
 - Noah has unfortunately given into his flesh, become drunk and uncovered himself
 - Thus proving that Noah was not perfect, not sinless, though he was a man of great faith
 - Then his son Ham saw his father and magnified his shame
 - Ham celebrated his father’s sin rather than showing discretion and endeavoring to cover the shame
 - His brothers, on the other hand, show mercy and do their best to help their father recover his dignity
 - Next we watch Noah’s response to how his children reacted
 - Noah responds by making prophetic statements concerning the boys and the future of their respective family lines
 - As we read these pronouncements, remember that Noah would have understood the seriousness of what he was saying
 - Noah understood that his boys would repopulate the earth
 - He knew that each son would produce a multitude of people over time
 - Which explains why Noah chose such sweeping pronouncements
 - And we must assume that Noah’s impetus to make these statements was the Spirit’s influence and direction
- So now look at Noah’s response:

Gen. 9:24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

Gen. 9:25 So he said,
 “Cursed be Canaan;
 A servant of servants
 He shall be to his brothers.”

Gen. 9:26 He also said,
 “Blessed be the LORD,
 The God of Shem;
 And let Canaan be his servant.

Gen. 9:27 “May God enlarge Japheth,
 And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
 And let Canaan be his servant.”

Gen. 9:28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

Gen. 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

- As Noah awoke, he learns of his indiscretions of the prior evening

- My English text says the “youngest” son
 - But the Hebrew word can also be translated younger, which is more accurate since Ham is the middle child
- Some of us may be able to identify with Noah, perhaps as a result of past decisions and indiscretions
 - The sinking feeling as we replay the previous night in our memory, piecing together what was said and done
- In Noah’s case, he probably noticed that he wasn’t wearing his normal sleep attire
 - Instead, there was a cloak thrown over him, something he wouldn’t have done for himself under normal circumstances
 - It probably didn’t require much thought to recognize that someone else had covered him
 - And with that recognition, Noah would have been horrified and embarrassed and ashamed
 - Perhaps he approached the boys to apologize or to ask for an explanation
 - In the course of that discussion, v.24 says Noah knew or understood what his youngest son had done
- And what Ham had done was disrespect his father
 - More than simply disrespect, Ham had shown a willingness to enjoy and even celebrate the sin of another
 - And in that behavior he had shamed Noah and himself
 - Ham’s example is a good one for us to consider ourselves
 - Do we glory in another’s sin?
 - Our first answer might be, “Of course not...”
 - But before we rush to that answer, let’s ask ourselves a few questions
 - When we learn embarrassing or shameful news of another person, do we ask ourselves who can I share this with?
 - If we’re out with friends and one person begins engaging in mischief, do we encourage them on hoping to see them do something outlandish or risk getting into trouble?
 - Do we look the other way when a friend breaks the rules or even the law rather than correcting them kindly and reminding them of their Christian witness?
- In all these cases, and others like them, we repeat the mistake of Ham, certainly in manner if not in degree
 - We glory in another’s sin, encouraging, feeding it or at least enjoying it vicariously
 - Paul said he prayed that the church would act differently

Phil. 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

Phil. 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

- Paul’s concern for the church was that we wouldn’t be a Ham, so to speak
 - We would abound in love based on knowledge and discernment
 - Which would lead us to approve of excellent things
 - And we would be blameless until our judgment day, filled with righteousness
 - We are not blameless if, by association, we encourage others into sin - that was Ham’s problem
- Noah certainly didn’t approve of Ham’s behavior, and in response Noah pronounces a curse
 - The first thing we notice is that the curse is directly against not Ham but Canaan
 - Since the beginning of this chapter, we’ve noticed that any mention of Ham has included the phrase “the father of Canaan”
 - Here we see why Moses has been making that connection throughout the chapter
 - Moses was helping us understand the connection between Ham and the curse Noah gives
 - Noah is upset at his son Ham, but Noah directs his curse at Ham’s son rather than at Ham himself
 - Why?
 - Do you remember what we learned in Chapter 3 concerning curses?
 - A curse is a pronouncement of eternal damnation
 - And when it comes from God (in this case by the power of the Spirit), it is a permanent and irrevocable verdict
 - Could God pronounce a curse – eternal damnation – upon Ham?
 - Remember Ham was one of the eight on the ark
 - Peter testifies that all eight on the ark were righteous by faith

2Pet. 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2Pet. 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

...

2Pet. 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- So if Ham is a man saved by God’s grace, then God cannot pronounce a curse upon Ham
 - This is the same situation as God faced with Adam and Woman in the Garden

- Adam sinned yet God pronounced curse not upon him but upon the ground, Adam's source
- Similarly here, God pronounces a curse through Noah upon Ham but indirectly
 - In this case it lands on Ham's son, Canaan
- Remember, being a believer doesn't assure us of a perfect life
 - A believer can sin, and a believer can find life taking terrible turns
 - Saving faith isn't an insurance policy against the horrors of a sinful world
 - Looking in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, we might notice that the first three men listed were Abel, Enoch and Noah
 - Noah dies of old age, but not before enduring a traumatic disaster and an embarrassing sinful episode
 - Enoch is preserved from even experiencing death
 - Abel was murdered at a young age
 - If these men can experience such different outcomes in life yet be listed in the Hall of Faith, then we can know anything can happen to us
 - But no matter what happens, we're assured that death won't conquer and we will receive an eternal inheritance
- So now we understand why Noah doesn't directly curse his own son Ham, but why place the curse on Canaan?
 - The answer is simple, but it may not be satisfying for us – at least not at first
 - God is intent on bringing a consequence for this sin
 - And the consequence must come from Noah, the man who now represents human government
 - But it can't come against Ham
 - And so it will flow from Ham to the next generation
 - And it doesn't really matter where it lands
 - God is sovereign over the life of each person and He determines how each life will serve His purposes
 - In God's wisdom and providence He determined that Canaan was the proper recipient of His wrath for Ham's sin
 - You might say that isn't fair, but remember that Canaan was born a sinner like every man
 - He was already on a path to judgment for his sins, like every unbeliever
 - Ham's sin didn't put Canaan under judgment
 - Canaan's own sin did that for him
 - But God's pronouncement means that Canaan will not receive God's grace so as to overcome his sin
 - He will be left in his sin, cursed as everyone who dies a sinner will be
 - Yet still we ask why Canaan? Why not Ham's oldest son Cush? Or the second or third children?

- Many commentators have tried to answer that in inventive ways, but I think the answer is simple
 - When God responded to Adam's sin in the Garden, He didn't curse Adam, but He cursed the ground
 - God's choice communicated that though Adam's sin required God's judgment, nevertheless God would turn that into good for those who love God
 - So by cursing the Earth, God was putting an end to our corrupted physical body, which came from the earth
 - And God was promising to replace the physical world, which itself was infected by sin
 - So now as God selects a son of Ham to curse, God selects the fourth son
 - And the number four in Scripture is the number associated with Earth
 - Like we see four compass directions, four seasons, four winds, four corners of the earth, etc.
 - Therefore, God repeats His pattern of cursing the earth, so to speak
- And like in the Garden, the curse against Canaan ultimately has a positive impact for those who love God and are called by His purpose
 - The family that descends from Canaan will become poster children for depravity in the land later occupied by Israel
 - They were sexually depraved and idolators with extreme practices
 - And when God's chosen people entered into the promised land under Joshua, God made Israel's army an instrument of punishment
 - They were conquered by God's people and they were in a position of slavery or inferiority until they were finally enslaved and destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC
 - Noah's pronouncement said Canaan would be cursed, a servant of servants, the lowest servant
 - And he would serve the people who come from his brothers, meaning the families of Shem and Japeth
 - The Israelites came from Shem and the Romans came from Japeth
 - God's wisdom is evident in this plan, as it ensures that the people disposed by the arrival of Israel in the land are a people properly destined for this outcome
 - Some have speculated that this curse is the source for the slavery of Africans over the centuries
 - Ham's descendants populate Africa, so this thinking is an attempt to justify the enslavement of Africans by Europeans
 - But even a casual reading of Genesis shows us the flaw in that thinking
 - Ham wasn't cursed, Canaan was cursed
 - And Canaan didn't settle in Africa
- Next, Noah turns to the other brothers who protected his dignity, and Noah pronounces blessing

- For Shem, Noah blesses not Shem directly but the “God of Shem”
 - For Shem, the meaning of this blessing is clear
 - He will be the line of the Seed
 - The promise for a Messiah will come through Shem
 - And Shem’s blessing will be found in the line of Messiah
- From Shem we get two notable lines of people present in the world today
 - First, we get the people of the promised seed; the Jewish people
 - Secondly, we get the Arab peoples; the appointed foils for Israel
 - We learn more about the origins of these two groups in future chapters
 - Both these groups are considered Semites, because both came from Shem
 - But only the Israelites are the promised seed line
 - And then Noah repeats that Canaan’s family would serve the families of Shem
- Finally, Noah turns to Japeth
 - Noah declares that Japeth and his families will be enlarged
 - Enlarged refers to both the number of them and their territory and wealth
 - The peoples who come from Japeth eventually settle Europe and Asia, and later North America
 - Obviously these territories represent the vast majority of the world’s population and the world’s wealth
 - And Japeth’s family would dwell in the tents of Shem
 - The phrase in Hebrew conveys a certain meaning
 - The word dwell in Hebrew (*sheken*) can mean to abide in
 - Similar to *shekan*, which is neighbor
 - The sense is of shared benefit
 - But the tents will be Shem’s
 - Japeth will have the wealth and the numbers
 - But they come to Shem’s home and gain benefit from association with Shem’s dwelling
 - The sharing will be mutual, but the greater blessing will come from Shem and go to Japeth
 - The fulfillment of this prophecy can only be understood spiritually
 - Shem will produce the line of the Messiah through Israel
 - And Japeth will produce the bulk of the Gentile people of the world
 - And the Gentiles will receive blessing by dwelling spiritually in Israel, Shem’s descendants
 - And Shem will benefit from the association because the Gentiles will bring numbers and wealth to serve Israel in the Kingdom

- Looking back at the three brothers, we can see each serving as a representative for the three major divisions of humanity, spiritually speaking
 - Ham, as represented by his son Canaan, pictures the fate of the sinner
 - The one who glories in sin, and celebrates the flesh
 - This person will go to destruction paying the penalty for that sin
 - We would say the unbeliever
 - Shem represents the Jew
 - The seed line
 - God's chosen people
 - The people who bring salvation to the world
 - Finally, Japheth represents the Gentile believer
 - Those who own the world but give it up for the hope of Israel
 - The person who later enters the family of God by faith and is grafted into the promises of Israel
 - Who will dwell in Israel's promised kingdom by association with God's promises
- To end this important chapter, Moses tells us of the end of Noah's story

Gen. 9:28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

Gen. 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

- Noah's life span is 950 years, of which 350 occurred after the Flood
 - Noah lives long enough to see the world repopulated
 - The world has seen people settled from Europe to Africa to East Asia
 - And Noah's son Shem, another passenger on the Ark, lived until Jacob was over 100 years old
 - Clearly, between Noah and Shem, there was plenty of opportunity for ancient men to hear the story of the flood firsthand, and record the details accurately
 - As news of his death spread, it must have been an important day
 - Noah was born shortly after Adam died
 - And now Noah was gone
 - And it's been 2,000 years since the Fall in the Garden
 - Until this moment, we could connect human history back to the beginning of time through the lives of just three people (Adam, Methuselah, Shem)
 - After Noah's death, length of lives drops dramatically
 - And in future generations, men will have lost that direct testimonial connection to the beginning of all things
 - And along the way languages are increased and distances grow, and men

begin to create stories to fill in their gaps of understanding history

- Myths and legends develop, idols increase
- And so the mercy of God is revealed in His willingness to record these truths through the prophet Moses
- So that even today, six thousands years or so later, we're still able to understand the details of our origins
- And more than that, we understand the hows and whys for the way things are
 - The source of sin, the consequences of men living apart from God
 - And God's mercy to provide a promised solution, found in the Lord Christ