

Genesis 9:1-29
Life After the Flood

Earlier this month, I was invited to attend a banquet for CareNet Northwest Houston Pregnancy Center

- It was a wonderful time of celebrating what God has done through local efforts to help women with crisis pregnancies

One of the highlights was hearing over and over again how much this organization values life

- Since every human being is precious, then a concerted effort needs to take place in order to spare every life possible

This unusually high value for life – both mothers and unborn children – is something that is very near and dear to this local church

- We believe that life begins at conception when God miraculously sets the wheels of creation into motion

But it's not only unborn children that are precious in the sight of God

- Every person on the face of the planet is precious
- God is the Creator of every human being

It seems that every day in Houston a murder takes place

- Murder is a crime for a number of reasons
- The greatest crime is that one individual takes matters into his/her own hands and ends the life of another human

The ancient book of Genesis has much to say about the value of life

- In Genesis 9, God reiterates some of His promises to Noah and his sons
- One of these promises is the sanctity of human life

It was necessary for God to affirm the value of human life after the Flood

- It could be that some thought that God held human life in a low view, considering His putting so many humans to death in the Flood¹

But God shows us this morning His perspective on the value of human life

Let's read Genesis 9:1-29

¹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 201.

Life continues after the Flood

- Sin has not been washed away in the Flood
- But even alongside the wrath of God, there is still mercy

Let's consider five (5) elements of life after the Flood so that we can see God's plan for humanity after the universal judgment of water

- Command to Noah and his sons
- Covenant with Noah
- Children of Noah
- Curse on Shem
- Conclusion of Noah

I. Command to Noah and his sons (9:1-7)

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

The last thing that we saw take place in Genesis 8 was Noah's sacrifice of animals

- As you remember, he took one of every clean animal and clean bird and offered it as a burnt offering to the Lord

God promised never to destroy the Earth again with a universal Flood

- While there would be local, isolated judgments, *never again* would there be a worldwide, cataclysmic devastation like the Flood

Now in chapter 9, God blesses Noah for his actions

- The form of blessing reminds us of what God did with Adam

This makes sense because in many ways, Noah is like Adam

- God is recreating the population of the Earth and He is using Noah and his three sons and their wives to accomplish that goal

In light of the fact that there are only eight (8) humans on the face of the Earth, God tells Noah and his sons to, "**be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth**"

- This is almost verbatim what God told Adam back in chapter 1:28
- **Considering the current population of the world is around 6.5 billion, I would say that Noah's three sons have done a good job!**

It makes sense that the blessing originally given to Adam would now be repeated to the new generations

The biggest difference between God's command to Adam and His command to Noah is the absence of the phrase, “rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28b)

- In many ways, that authority and ruling ability had been marred in the Fall
- Mankind did not totally rule over the creation

² “And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

God also informs Noah that the animal world would live in a steady state of fear of humans

- The Fall of man affected all life forms – not just humans but animals as well

Mankind is the pinnacle of God's creation

- As such, this ingrained fear of the animals toward humans would be a safeguard
- Without such a fear, the animals might kill the eight humans and thus destroy the human race

As we will see in the next two verses, mankind would begin to kill the animals for food

- Hence, I believe this was a God-given response for the animals

³ Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. ⁴ Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Just as God provided food for Adam and Eve, so He does with Noah and his family

- But a new permission is given to Noah
- He and his family could now eat meat

There is a difference of opinion whether or not those before the Flood were allowed to eat meat

- Undoubtedly some ate meat whether or not it was allowed by God

But in this case, Noah and his family are invited to eat meat with only one restriction

- “only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is, its blood*”

Something is very special about the blood of animals

- God was preparing to teach humans something very special about the blood
- In the OT, blood is equated with life

Later on in the book of Leviticus, much is made of the importance of the blood as it relates to sacrifice (cf. 17:11)

- The life of the animal – represented by the blood – would be offered as an atonement for sin²
- The principle of substitution was already being introduced

For now, God was prohibiting them from eating the blood

- They were to obey God’s commands whether they realized the rationale for it or not

The blood of these animals would figuratively cover sins

- Their purpose was to point to a great reality – Jesus Christ, the promised Deliverer Seed
- “**He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**” (Heb 9:26)

⁵ And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. ⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

If the blood of animals was precious to God, then how much more so was the blood of humans!

- That is what we find taught in verses 5 & 6

These verses help us to see a glimpse into how highly God views life

While God is very gracious and merciful in holding man’s life in high regard, He is also a God of wrath

- He was teaching humanity that there are consequences to sin
- Left unchecked, sin could cause drastic and deadly effects

² Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Genesis 1-11:26*, 402.

Left to themselves, sinful mankind would commit the most heinous of crimes

- The killing of one human by another
- Homicide, murder, assassination, manslaughter – it all refers to the same vile act

Before the Flood, the absence of capital punishment had already resulted in murder³

- In chapter four, we read that Cain killed his brother, Abel

God specifies two different kinds of man's blood being shed

- By animals and by other humans
- In both cases, the animal or human must be put to death

These two verses here in Genesis 9 are crucial in a right understanding of the issue of capital punishment

- This is not a political platform for me to express my views on how government should handle various situations
- This is a Christian platform for me to expound God's views on how we as humans need to view human life

God was not condoning revenge

- He was laying the realization that people have to be accountable for their actions
- When every person takes justice into his own hands, the result is always anarchy⁴

Of course, this is the Biblical beginnings for government

- Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 addresses the role of government as it relates to evildoers

Notice the threefold repetition of “**I will require**” used in these two verses⁵

- God Himself would see to it that accountability was brought
- God would act as the Judge who would exact a severe penalty for infractions⁶

Mankind does not have sovereign rule over the universe

- That is God's prerogative and privilege

³ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 143.

⁴ Mathews, 406.

⁵ Ross, 205.

⁶ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 224.

God is the One who sets down the rules and restrictions on what we can and cannot do

- Mankind is left to obey or disobey these Divine commands

Part of the realization why God views human life so highly is the simple awareness that we are all related

- Sure, our last names may be different
- But we are all descended from Adam and Eve

This makes us family

- And when one human kills another, it is an ending of the life of a family member

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule of capital punishment

- Not every murderer will be executed

We think of King David who committed both adultery and murder

- But was not executed

God can grant forgiveness to those whom He wills

- This is the essence of the Gospel!

II. Covenant with Noah (9:8-17)

⁸ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹ “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. ¹¹ And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Back in Genesis 6:18 – before the Flood – God told Noah, “I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you”

- Notice God’s use of the future tense, “I *will*” (italics mine)

We find ourselves in Genesis 9 and God tells Noah, “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you” (9:9)

- Here is where God actually enters into a binding covenant with Noah

It is incredible that God would enter into a covenant with sinful humanity

- For God to bind Himself is astonishing
- But we know of other covenants in Scripture – Mosaic, Davidic, the new covenant – just to name a few

God's desire to enter into a covenant helps us to understand the relationship that God wants to have with humanity

- God could have wiped the Earth of every human being
- But instead, He saved a remnant and *bound Himself in a covenant*

Also observe that God is now speaking to Noah and his entire family

- Up to this point in the Flood account, God was speaking exclusively to Noah

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ 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.”

Notice a few things about this covenant⁷

- Notice its scope, “with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature...the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you” (9:9-10)
 - This is no longer just between God and Noah
 - This is now between every living being on the face of the Earth
- Notice its permanency, “**everlasting covenant**” (9:16)
 - This isn't a one-generational promise
 - This extends from that point in history to our current generation

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 101.

- Notice its generosity
 - o This covenant is unconditional – God took the sole initiative in fulfilling it
 - o This covenant is also undeserved – God didn’t have to bind Himself like this

What would be the sign of this covenant?

- The rainbow in the sky
- God refers to it as “My bow” (9:13)

Interestingly enough, the rainbow isn’t primarily for *our* benefit

- Look at verses 14-15, “And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud,¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh”

God promises that when He sees the rainbow, He will “remember” the covenant

- This same word “remember” was used back in 8:1
 - o It’s not that God forgets
 - o The meaning of “remember” is God’s initiative toward those with whom He has a covenant
 - o It is a sign of His faithfulness and fidelity

The promise is not that there will be a rainbow in every cloud

- Rather, the promise is that God’s faithfulness will be manifested every time there is a rainbow

Also observe the number of times God repeats Himself regarding this covenant⁸

- “between Me and you” (9:12)
- “between Me and the earth” (9:13)
- “between Me and you” (9:15)
- “between God and every living creature” (9:16)
- “between Me and all flesh that is on the earth” (9:17)

Notice that God *always* puts His own name first⁹

- This reminds us that God is the One who will see that this covenant is faithfully kept!

⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Genesis 1-15*, 195.

⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 1-17*, 318.

As we think about the rainbow, our minds should be brought into a state of reflection

- The rainbow is always arched in a semicircle
- This reminds us that God's promise is all-encompassing

Also, the rainbow can be seen from every country in the world

- It is not exclusive to the United States
- This reminds us that God's promise is universal to all peoples

God uses various illustrations to point out Divine truths¹⁰

- Passover Lamb
- Brazen Serpent
- Baptism
- Lord's Supper

These four are just a sampling of symbols that point to a greater reality

- In the case of the rainbow, we should not be enamored with its beauty and color
- We should be enamored with God's faithfulness never to destroy the Earth again with water

III. Children of Noah (9:18-19)

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was populated.

This short section is a transition between the life of Noah and the lives of his children

Noah doesn't have any more children after the Flood

- All children born after the Flood will come from Noah's three sons and their wives
- Verse 19 affirms this, "**from these the whole earth was populated**"

We must keep in mind that only eight (8) humans survived the Flood

- Noah and his wife
- Shem and his wife
- Ham and his wife
- Japheth and his wife

¹⁰ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 90.

These three sons have received only minimal attention over the past few chapters

- However, they are soon to become a major part of the story

IV. Curse on Shem (9:20-27)

²⁰ Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹ And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

Suddenly, the story is fast-forwarded to a certain time in Noah's life

- This must have been some time that elapsed between the Flood and these events
- Verse 18 informs us that Canaan – the youngest son of Ham – had been born
 - o This would have been Noah's grandson!

He is settled down after leaving the Ark

- He is a farmer and he has planted a vineyard

There is nothing wrong with being a farmer or planting a vineyard

- We know that Cain “**was a tiller of the ground**” (4:2)

The problem comes into sharp focus when the Text notes that Noah “**drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent**”

- Drinking wine in excess has left to drunkenness
- Drunkenness has led to a moral lapse of judgment

If we didn't know this beforehand, we know it now

- The Flood ridded the Earth of many things
- But water can never cleanse the heart of a sinner

Sin is alive and kicking in the lives of Noah and his family

- And it is about to rear its ugly head in ways that we would never imagine

This is the first mention of wine in the Scriptures

- And it is not spoken of in a positive light

We know from other Biblical passages that it is not wrong to drink wine in moderation

- Wine “**makes man's heart glad**” (Ps 104:15)
- Proverbs 31:6 tells us that wine can be a means of numbing pain

However, the Bible is just as clear about the dangers of drinking wine in excess

- “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise” (Prov 20:1)
- “Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk so as to look on their nakedness!” (Hab 2:15)

Noah’s problem is not so much his use of wine

- It is his abuse of wine that gets him into trouble

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

There is a definite contrast that the author is trying to point out to us

- It is the two contrasting actions between Ham and his two brothers, Shem and Japheth

There has been much disagreement about what Ham did to his father

- Many various opinions exist as to the actions that Ham took toward his father
- But I think that much of this discussion overlooks the obvious

The Text says that Ham “**saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside**”

- The author skims over the details in a rather concise manner
- Not a lot of information is given to us

But the sin of Ham is quite obvious from this short account

- He “**saw**” his father’s nakedness

This word can denote a gazing or staring¹¹

- It is not a quick glance

If we refer back to verse 21, we read that Noah had “**uncovered himself inside his tent**” (italics mine)

- While this was certainly inappropriate, he was at least inside his own tent

¹¹ Morris, 235.

- He wasn't walking around outside so that everyone could have seen him

Somehow – the Text doesn't tell us – Ham went into his father's tent and noticed his father's condition

- He should have covered him up so that no one else would see him
- But he doesn't

The Text tells us that he stared – gazed – at his father's condition

- After some time had passed, he went and told his brothers
- Undoubtedly, Ham thought that his two brothers would get a good laugh out of seeing him drunk and naked

But Shem and Japheth had a different response

- Verse 23 says that they took, “a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father, and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness”

What a different approach!

- Ham gazed – Shem and Japheth refused to glance
- Ham dishonored his father – Shem and Japheth honored their father
- Ham left his father uncovered – Shem and Japheth covered their father

These two older brothers took great pains to show respect and honor to their father who was in a helpless situation

- They took a garment – probably the very garment that Ham had taken from Noah's tent – and draped it over their shoulders
- Then they walked backwards, so as not to see their father's nudity

The Text could not be clearer

- These two older brothers acted with integrity, respect, and honor

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

Sometime after Shem and Japheth had covered Noah, he “awoke from his wine”

- He is beginning to sober up

But he notices something is different

- Verse 24 says, “he knew what his youngest son had done to him”

Granted, we are missing a few details that would have really helped us understand this Text better

- But we can put the pieces of the puzzle together well enough

Verse 21 has told us that Noah uncovered himself

- It does ***not*** say that another person uncovered him

Noah is drunk but remembers that he had uncovered himself

- But when he awakens from his drunken stupor, he notices that he is *covered*
- The insinuation is that someone else covered him

Immediately he would know something had happened

- How he knew the details, we are not told
- Perhaps his wife told him
- Perhaps his two older sons informed him of what happened

Let's miss the obvious when searching for the obscure

- Noah knew that Ham had acted inappropriately toward him

In our sin-saturated society, this account may surprise us

- On any given day, we may come into contact with various forms of immodesty
 - o Newspapers
 - o Magazines
 - o TV commercials and shows
 - o Internet banners and websites
 - o Billboards
 - o People themselves
- Our mind has become dull to the high sense of modesty and propriety that Noah exemplified throughout his life

Throughout the OT, nudity was looked upon as shameful¹²

- Uncovering another was tantamount to crossing a God-ordained boundary
- To see someone uncovered was disgraceful

¹² Ross, 215.

So Ham's senses were obviously compromised long before he saw his father uncovered

- This is why he lingered and hesitated before taking action

He should have immediately turned away and covered his father's nudity

- But he didn't

²⁵ So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." ²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."

Now men, imagine the grief that would be in your heart if you were Noah

- You have just discovered that your own son has not honored you as he should
- What do you do next?

In response to Ham's actions, Noah utters a curse

- This is the first time in Scripture that a human being curses another human being

This is also the only time that we have a record of Noah speaking during his life!¹³

- He has built an Ark
- He has ordered the animals onboard the Ark
- He has offered sacrifices to the LORD
- But this is the first time that we read his words

We know from our study in Genesis that there have been other things cursed¹⁴

- The serpent (3:14)
- Cain (4:11)
- Now Canaan (9:25)

You may be asking, "*What right does Noah have placing a curse on his grandson?*"

- After all, it was Noah's son – not his grandson – who sinned against him
- But it seems as if Ham walks away unaffected

¹³ Waltke, 149.

¹⁴ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 128.

We have to keep in mind that Noah knew his children very well

- By this time, Noah also had grandchildren

Whether we care to admit it or not, children take after their parents

- Children imitate their parents in many ways

When Noah looked at his three sons, he could detect certain character qualities in them that distinguished them from one another¹⁵

- These attributes would most likely be passed on and developed in their children
- You have heard the expression, “like father, like son”

When Noah understood what Ham had done, I believe that he realized – ashamedly so – that Canaan would most likely follow in his father’s footsteps

But even with all of this in mind, Noah’s curse would only be effective if God chose to enact it

- In other words, God had the final word on whether Canaan would be cursed or not

Otherwise, these curses could be viewed upon as magical incantations that could be uttered against others

- We simply don’t find that sort of thing in Scripture

With regret over his son’s sin, Noah utters a plea that Ham’s youngest son, Canaan, would be “a servant of servants”

- He asked that they suffer the loss of freedom
- The loss of freedom to his own two brothers

Certainly this curse was intended on more than just Ham’s youngest son

- It was intended for future generations

Three times in verses 25-27 this servitude was alluded to

- It was meant to be a resounding echo that this was, indeed, what Noah desired for Ham’s lineage

Noah knew that Ham’s sensual character would be the model for his sons

- Lest they have power over others, Noah desires – and prays – that God would put them in subjection to others
- Noah didn’t want Ham’s lineage to dominate and dishonor others as he had with his own father

¹⁵ Ross, 210.

Let me make this clear¹⁶

- The Canaanites were not cursed because of what Ham did
- They were cursed because they acted just like their father

There are certainly exceptions

- Undoubtedly, there were some Canaanites who acted in a godly, honorable fashion
- But as we know from history, most of the Canaanite lineage was characterized by ungodly, immoral attitudes
 - o *Like father, like son*

Just as Noah cursed Ham, he blesses his other two sons

For Shem, he said, “**Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant**” (9:26)

- It is interesting that Noah does not bless Shem
- Noah blesses the LORD!

Noah must have known that Shem was a strong believer

- He uses the name “**LORD**” – Yahweh
- The Covenant-keeping name of God

Realize that the hope of the Deliverer Seed is still alive

- One would come from the seed of a woman
 - o At this point, it either had to be Shem, Ham, Japheth, or one from their lineage!

As we will learn in chapter 11, it is through the line of Shem that the Deliverer Seed comes¹⁷

As for Japheth, Noah says, “**May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant**” (9:27)

- The father wishes for his son to enjoy God’s blessings as well

Notice that Noah wishes for Japheth to prosper and “**let him dwell in the tents of Shem**”

- This was a way of indicating the close relationship between the line of Shem and the line of Japheth
- They would worship the same God

¹⁶ Ross, 218.

¹⁷ Mathews, 423.

But with both Shem and Japheth, Noah repeats the phrase, “and let Canaan be his servant”

V. Conclusion of Noah (9:28-29)

²⁸ And Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. ²⁹ So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

Noah lives 350 years after the Flood

- He was 600 years old when the Flood came (7:6)
- He lived to be 950 years old

The only two people to outlive Noah were Methuselah (969) and Jared (962)

Nothing more is said about Noah after this tragic event

- We read of his obituary as written by his children

His children had written such a lofty description of their father back in chapter 6, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (6:9)

The last thing that we know of this man was this unusual act of indecency and intoxication

- It is sad that a man who was so obedient in so many areas was disobedient in a few minor areas

I am sure that the shadow of this sin followed Noah for the rest of his earthly life

- It is not something that you can easily forget
- Every time Noah saw Ham, he would be reminded of this unfortunate event

This should be a lesson to all of us about how we live our lives

- We can be careful 99% of the time
- However, all it takes is a few minutes of sin to ruin our reputation and character

Consider these thoughts about the life of Noah¹⁸

- A believer is not immune from sin
- A believer can find great danger in the smallest of temptations
- A believer can be the cause of sin in the life of another
- A believer is not above the consequences of sin

There is never a time when you and I can let our guard down

- Satan will lure us into a state of complacency
- However, we must be alert at all times!

¹⁸ Griffith-Thomas, 98-99.