

# GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

## The Curse of Canaan

*Canaan is cursed.*

*He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers.*

*<sup>26</sup> He also said:*

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;*

*Let Canaan be Shem's slave.*

*<sup>27</sup> Let God extend Japheth;*

*let Japheth dwell in the tents of Shem;*

*let Canaan be Shem's slave.*

*Genesis 9:25-27 (ESV)*

### 3 Observations from Genesis 9: (A Review)

#### 1. Noah \_\_\_\_\_ Shem and Japheth.

A driving theme in Genesis is the promised seed of woman who will crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). The author traces the seed from Adam to Abel to Seth to Noah and here through Shem, who turns out to be the great-grandfather of Abraham (Gen. 11:10–26).

#### 2. Not \_\_\_\_\_ of Ham's sons were cursed.

Ham had four sons: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan, but only Canaan was cursed (Gen. 9:25–27; 10:6–20). The Canaanites' abundant wickedness proved the curse was warranted. As a result, they were enslaved by a coalition of eastern kings (Gen. 14), by the Israelites during the conquest (Josh. 9:27; Judg. 1), and by Solomon during his reign as king (1 Kings 9:20–21).

#### 3. The curse on Ham's son wasn't about \_\_\_\_\_.

Noah's curse of Canaan was due to his \_\_\_\_\_, not his skin color. Though most of Ham's sons and the cities they built (Babel, Nineveh, Sodom, Gomorrah) were marked by idolatry and immorality, Canaan was uniquely evil and defiled the land (cf. Lev. 18). The Canaanites were cursed because they were evil-hearted, not because they were dark-skinned.

### Big Picture:

Why did the curse fall on Canaan? First, because Noah likely detected in Canaan the evil traits he had seen in his \_\_\_\_\_.

The Torah, which shows that God deals justly with all people, suggests that Noah anticipated in him the evil traits that marked his father Ham. The text has prepared us for this conclusion by twice

pointing out that Ham was *the father of Canaan*, a phrase that signifies more than \_\_\_\_\_. Even though the oracle of cursing would weigh heavily on Ham as he saw his family marred, it was directed to his distant descendants, who retained the traits.<sup>1</sup>

Second, this curse was a prophetic *oracle*. Delitzsch writes:

*Noah, through the Spirit and power of that God with whom he walked, discerned in the moral nature of his sons, and the different tendencies which they already displayed, the germinal commencement of the future course of their posterity, and uttered words of blessing and of curse, which were prophetic of the history of the tribes that descended from them.*<sup>2</sup>

Such curses had no power in themselves, unless the Lord fulfilled them. God would bring this curse about only if it was his desire to do so — which it was.

Third, Canaan was the father of the Canaanites, the depraved nemesis of Israel. Therefore the curse fell on Israel's \_\_\_\_\_. The Canaanites were a sensually depraved people. Everything the pagan Canaanites did was an extrapolation of Ham's lurid sensuality. From the moment Abram entered the land, the Canaanites were there spreading corruption (cf. Genesis 13, 15, 18, 19, 38). Leviticus 18 describes the degenerate practices of the Canaanites with a litany of euphemisms so as not to offend the reader, employing "nakedness" twenty-four times (verses 7–23).

The curse upon Canaan had immense contemporary relevance for the original readers of the Torah as they sojourned for forty years in the desert. Their orders were to drive out the Canaanites. Noah's oracle had prophesied the bitter fruit that all now could see. The Canaanites were naked, shameless, and uncovered. They would become the "servant of servants" (9:25) to Shem and Japheth — that is, to Israel as they swept over Canaan.

### Some Conclusions:

The curse on Canaan is \_\_\_\_\_ in duration to refer to the enemies of God's people (Israel – from line of Shem) particularly during the time of the acquisition of the \_\_\_\_\_.

We'd be very hard-pressed to apply this curse throughout history to ALL of Ham's descendants (and we might end up with some tragic mis-application of scripture and horrific theology if we do).

The curse of Genesis 9 was not \_\_\_\_\_, but was a curse on those whose \_\_\_\_\_ deserved it.

That the curse is on Ham's son raises questions about \_\_\_\_\_, but note how God visits the father's iniquity upon his young:

*Exodus 20:5 (ESV): You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me ...*

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<sup>1</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 217.

<sup>2</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, 157.

But ... sins do have a tragic way of becoming \_\_\_\_\_.

The sins of the fathers are punished in the children through \_\_\_\_\_ the sins of the children.

God's judgment here assumes the offspring are evil \_\_\_\_\_ their parents; "those who hate me" defines the accursed. Children of the wicked often persist in sin and justify their damnation, but the curse is removed from the repentant. \_\_\_\_\_, a Canaanite, hid the Israeli spies in faith and was blessed (Josh. 2; 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31).

And, the children can confess their \_\_\_\_\_ sins and the sins of their fathers and be forgiven and accepted by God.

*But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers...if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob" (Leviticus 26:40-42).*

The biblical record is clear that if \_\_\_\_\_ took up the customs of the Canaanites, they too would face \_\_\_\_\_.

They were not to \_\_\_\_\_ (Gen 24:37, 28:1).

They were not to follow their \_\_\_\_\_ (Lev. 18)

They were not \_\_\_\_\_ like them. (Deut. 12:2-4)

They were to \_\_\_\_\_ them and \_\_\_\_\_ them (Deut. 7:1-6)

It's clear from Genesis 10 ("The Table of Nations") that we all have the same ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ (Noah). We are all made in \_\_\_\_\_.

The judgments are against \_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_.

From John Piper:

*Nobody is trapped in his father's sins — or even in his own sins. We already see it in the Old Testament. Leviticus 26:40-42: "If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers . . . if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob". So nobody in the Old or the New Testament is trapped or enslaved or in bondage or under an unbreakable curse because of something the fathers did, or something they did.*

*The precious words of Exodus 34:6-7 are not nullified by generational migration of sin. It says, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands" — and then, as if to get the point across, he gives three words — "forgiving iniquity and [forgiving] transgression and [forgiving] sin."*

*I mean, you can't get clearer at the center of the Mosaic Law than from generation to generation God forgives the sins of those who repent.*

Next week: **The Table of Nations**