

Genesis 9:24-29

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When Noah wakes up, he knows what Ham has done. Noah curses Canaan, Ham's son and blesses Shem and Japheth. Noah dies at age 950 years.

Noah can be compared to Adam. Just as Adam and his family fell and brought on themselves a curse ([Genesis 3:17](#)), so Noah and his family fell and brought on themselves a curse. We know Adam had three sons, two good (Abel and Seth) and one wicked (Cain). Likewise, Noah had three sons, two good and one wicked. When Noah awoke and became sober, he gave a blessing and curse about the future of his three sons and their generations.

One should interpret these blessings and curses as to the nations or descendants of the sons rather than about the sons themselves. First, Noah pronounces a curse. We are not told why, but Noah cursed Canaan (his grandson) and not Ham (his youngest son). In [Genesis 48:15-16](#), Joseph is said to be blessed when his children are blessed. In contrast, Ham felt the effects of the curse upon his child Canaan.

Noah's curse on Canaan represents God's sentence on the sins of the Canaanites, which their forefather Ham had typified. This was the second curse pronounced on a human, the first having been on Cain. Noah said, not just a servant, but a *servant of servants* (the lowest of low) *he shall be to his brothers*. This was a typical way of saying things in the ancient language (i.e. wickedness of wickedness, King of kings). Some Bible translations use the term, *slave of slaves*.

Ham had other children too. But the curse was only given to Canaan. This curse was fulfilled when Canaan's descendants were defeated in battle by the peoples from Shem and Japheth's generations. Shem, the ancestor of the Israelites, was to be the master over Ham's descendants, the Canaanites. Ham's treatment of his father represented the immoral practices of the Canaanites. They would develop licentious habits and therefore be doomed by their vices to enslavement. The Canaanites (i.e., the pre-existing inhabitants of Palestine before Joshua and the Israelites conquered it) were an evil idolatrous people. They worshiped many gods including "Baal." Several of their religious practices, such as, cultic prostitution and Molech worship

(sacrificing children, [Leviticus 18:21, 20:2-5](#)) influenced inhabitants of the land. Canaan's descendants would be servants and not world leaders or conquerors.

Next, Noah blessed (praised) the Lord instead of Shem because He is the source of Shem's blessings, saying *Blessed be the Lord, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant*. A blessing implies the inheritance of something good. One translator suggests, "May God bless the tents of Shem." I. The one and true living God shall be Shem's God, and the knowledge and practice of faith will continue among his descendants. Shem is the one through whom the promised blessing will come to Abraham. God tells Abraham, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" ([Genesis 12:3](#)). It is through the line of Shem the Messiah will be born.

In verse 27, Noah blesses Japheth saying, *May God enlarge Japheth (or enlarge to Japheth) And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant*. Japheth is the ancestor of the Gentile nations. His descendants would live among Shem's descendants (called the Semites) and share Shem's prosperity and his blessings. They would become allies. This was fulfilled to a substantial degree when Peter and Paul were commissioned to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. The Christian church began as a Shem/Jewish only movement, then spread to the Gentiles, who make up most of Christianity today. All Gentile believers are, in this sense, dwelling in the tents of Shem.

Chapter 9 closes with the death of Noah at age 950. Using data we have available, the math would indicate that Noah died when Abraham was about 58 years old. Noah also lived to see the tower of Babel. It is implied that Noah only had the three sons and none other. Central to the events in the Bible is that the fate of people is connected with their obeying or rejecting God's laws and plans. It is also notable that this great man of faith's story ends and we pick up with one of his descendants as the heir of faith in Abraham. Each of us has a season of life. It may be that the other deeds of Noah were incredibly significant. But the Bible only tells us snippets, in order that we might be instructed ([1 Corinthians 10:11](#)).

Biblical Text

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 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.”²⁸ 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.