

Genesis 9:18-29

Tastes Great . . . Less Filling

In high school I was very active in the Key Club. Sometime during the spring of my junior year of high school we had our initiation where I was inducted into the Key Club. A bunch of us hopped in the back of a truck and headed out to a friend's house where the initiation was to be held. I remember when the truck pulled into an ABC store (Alcoholic Beverage Control) that I wondered what was going on. It was explained to me that after the initiation the chaperones would be leaving and we would then be able to start drinking. I was immediately asked what I wanted to drink. Not wanting to appear "out of touch," I pulled out what money I had and said, "just get me a 6 pack."

Little did I stop to think what impact that decision would have. Seldom do we think in the heat of impetuous decisions. You see, I hadn't set any pre-determined standards about that area of my life. So when I was faced with the situation, I didn't really know what to do. And unfortunately, I did the wrong thing; I went with the crowd. Young people and adults alike need to set their standards in advance. Musically, you need to decide what kind of music will you allow to influence you. Sexually, you need to determine how far is too far. (Although this message isn't about this subject the best advice I could give would be to not even kiss before marriage!) Socially, you need to decide where will you go and what will you participate in (which includes deciding about going to bars, different types of parties, etc.). And not only in these areas, but in all areas as well, some pre-determined decisions need to be made!

What is the importance of this? If you don't make these decisions now you'll fail when the moment of decision does come! You'll find yourself involved in sin you wish you'd have avoided. And you'll learn the truth of what we see in this account here: the impact of sin is far-reaching! Let's notice how far-reaching it is by examining this passage.

We see first Noah the Father in verses 18-19. We learn that Noah had three sons. They're listed here as Shem, Ham, Japheth. In actuality, we learn from Genesis 10:21 that Japheth was the eldest. The New American Standard makes it sound like Shem was the eldest when it says, "also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth . . ." But the Hebrew is more accurately read as depicted in both the New International and the King James: "Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth . . ." (NIV) or "Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, . . ." (KJV). So we see that Japheth was in fact the eldest of the children, yet Shem is listed first because Jesus was descended from him. It seems that Noah had no more sons after the Flood. Thus all of us are descended from one of these three sons of Noah - no matter who we are! You say how can that be? Some are black and others are white. And Asians are different from both! Essentially, geneticists say that there are three kinds of people on earth: Europeans (Anglo), Africans (Negro), and Asians (Oriental). But what about Indians? Many believe they are some combination of these groups who migrated to the Americas.

It's not hard to see that we have three basic groups and three sons of Noah. Ham was the father of those of African descent (his name is akin to the word Egyptians used to

refer to themselves - Kem). Shem is the father of Orientals (including Jews, which is why they're called Semitic people). Japheth then is the father of Europeans, i.e. the white races of Europe. As these people groups went to these areas of the world after the Flood, they began adapting to different climatic conditions. The Japhites in Europe found themselves in fair weather, thus becoming fair skinned. The Hamites in Africa were in harsher weather conditions, thus they became dark skinned. And the Shemites of the Orient have a kind of in between appearance.

We're also told here that Ham is the father of Canaan. That little detail is significant for two reasons: first, Canaan plays a role in events about to transpire in passage; and second, Canaan was Ham's youngest son (thus we can conclude this event took place a number of years after the Flood!). What event was that? Well, we note that next.

Notice then Noah and his Failure in verses 20-23. Here is the first mention of wine in the Bible. Many today would try to make a biblical case for drinking in moderation. But an important principle of biblical interpretation is one known as the "law of first mention." The way something is mentioned the first time in scripture is significant. Here, alcohol is mentioned for the first time in scripture; and it's in a negative light.

We notice the *drunkenness of Noah* (vv. 20-21). In Noah's defense perhaps it could be argued that he didn't realize the potency of fermented grape juice. This was a new world with new climatic conditions. Still, this was some time after Flood. And although Noah was not generally characterized by this type of behavior, he certainly fell short here!

Isn't it interesting that Noah was so often sober in drunken company (for years as he worked on the Ark), but now he was drunk in sober company. The lesson is if you think you're immune, take heed, lest you fall. Noah sinned, yes. But we're sinners too. We're just as capable of falling. That's why it is imperative that you set some hedges around your life; principled hedges such as I will not drink ever, etc.

Noah's drunkenness led to the *disgrace of Ham* (v. 22). Exactly what it was Ham did isn't clear. Maybe he had been drunk himself and Noah had reprovved him. Now he walks in on his father in the same situation and so he begins to mock and broadcast Noah's failure. The scripture does say he went out to Shem and Japheth and told them. Such a situation should have made Ham mournful. Yet he made a jest of sin.

Folks, it is never right and it is never funny to laugh at sin. But isn't that what we so often do? Somebody's drunk. They stumble around, speak out of their head, and what do we do; we laugh at it! Somebody's teasing another person calling them nerd, geek, etc. We see the other person hurting, but what do we do; so often we just laugh along with the rest! Such action is nothing short of a disgrace. It was a disgrace for Ham and it is for us, as well. Ham should have honored his father; yet he broadcast his faults!

In contrast, however, note the *discernment of Shem and Japheth* (v. 23). Both honored and protected their father. They went in backwards so as not to see his nakedness themselves. They covered Noah so others wouldn't see either. The Apostle Peter said "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). That's not meant to say that Shem and Japheth condoned what their father did. It's just meant to point out that love is concerned to protect, not mock!

There's an important lesson here for young people: your parents AREN'T perfect. In fact, none of us are. Being in submission to them as their child, you're called to honor them with the discernment shown by Shem and Japheth; not to mock like Ham. From this event springs one of the Bible's most remarkable prophecies.

Notice then Noah and the Future in verses 24-27. After waking up and realizing what happened, Noah shows amazing prophetic foresight. He gives here a prophecy about the future that time has proven 100% accurate. Notice what he speaks of.

We learn first of *Canaan's pain* (vv. 24-25). Here indeed is an abused part of the word of God! In the past, this passage has often been used to support slavery. The idea was that God had cursed blacks into slavery. But notice that the curse is on Canaan, NOT Ham! Ham had other descendants that would be dark-skinned too. If the curse was for blacks to be enslaved, the curse would have been placed upon Ham. But obviously, God never intended for one race to be subject to slavery!

Why then was Canaan singled out? After all, it was his father, Ham, who was guilty. Maybe since Ham was blessed by God (Genesis 9:1), he couldn't be cursed by Noah. Perhaps it was just the outworking of divine law which says that the sins of the father will be visited on the subsequent generations (Exodus 20:5 - Sin DOES have far-reaching consequences!). Who knows if Canaan may not have taken part in some unrecorded way. Whatever the reason, Noah does look down through portals of time with prophetic vision. He sees that the descendants of this son of Ham will become bitter enemies of the people of God. Throughout the history books of the Old Testament, we read of the vileness and filthiness of the Canaanite tribes. They were bitter and persistent thorns in the flesh to the Jews. Eventually they were either stamped out or became enslaved to Jews (cf. Judges 1:30, et. al.).

The lesson for us is that we need to realize it took some 800 years for all this to work out. In fact, for several hundred years after the event, it looked like the Hamites would dominate the world! But their time was short-lived. As Matthew Henry says, "though divine curses operate slowly, yet . . . they will take effect." The New Testament says it this way: "do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Sin indeed has far-reaching consequences. We see here where it reached through the remainder of time. Don't mess with sin. It's not worth the awful price that has to be paid!

But we must also note *Shem's privilege* (v. 26). What was that privilege? Through Shem's line would come the Messiah. Some read verse 26 as "blessed be the Lord God who comes from Shem." For years, the Semitic people known as Jews had the privilege of God's revelation. They had the knowledge of God's redemption. Now they blew it royally, but that's another message! The point here is that their privilege is our privilege. We have the revealed word of God, and we've been given "the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19b). Let's make sure we exercise that tremendous privilege.

Notice also *Japheth's power* (v. 27). All Aryan races are Japhetic in origin. For years now, they have held men's destiny in their hands. We also see that they have a special relationship with Semitic people. What's this enlarging and bringing into Shem's tents all about? Enlarge could also be read persuade. This pictures prophetically the conversion of Gentiles and their being brought into the church. When the church began, it was essentially Jewish. One of the earliest controversies was, what should be done

about the Gentiles (Acts 15, et. al.)? But how wonderfully true the word of God is. Thousands of years before it even happened, God records it here as Noah looks into the future to see the event! After such an amazing prophecy, however, we see that Noah's time was eventually up.

So notice then Noah and his Finale in verses 28-29. Nine-hundred and fifty years - twenty more than Adam but nineteen less than Methuselah. Noah lived to see two worlds; but being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died, he went to see a better than either! Are you prepared to see that world? The only way you will is by surrendering your life to Christ!

I arrived at the Key Club initiation and had a good time. Eventually the chaperones left and it was time to party. Noah didn't have anything alcoholic compared to our stash we'd gathered together! But then I saw two guys in a truck. One was a close friend (who eventually would become one of my best friends). I asked them why they were leaving and not planning to stay for the party. They responded, "all everybody is going to do is get sloppy drunk. We don't need that. We're leaving." I considered what they said and asked, "can I ride home with you guys."

Thank God for Greg and David, the two guys who were bold enough to stand up. Two guys who had set some pre-determined boundaries in their life. But friends, Greg and David won't always be around. That's why it's imperative you prepare now for what you'll do. Sin may taste great and be less filling, but in the end, it will do nothing less than destroy you. It's impact is far-reaching. So great was it's impact that 2000 years ago it caused Christ to be nailed to a cross. But because of His sacrifice, we can know forgiveness of sin and be brought into a right relationship with God Almighty.