

Genesis Chapter 9 Notes (Defenders Study Bible by Morris)

9:1 replenish the earth. This is the same command given to Adam and Eve; the word “replenish” (Hebrew *male*), simply means “fill.”

9:2 are they delivered. In essence the primeval commission to mankind (the so-called “dominion mandate”) is here reiterated to Noah and his descendants, though with some emendations. Man is still to be in dominion over all other creatures and over the earth itself, even though Satan’s usurpation of that dominion must continually be recognized and rectified, with God’s enablement. Man’s relation to the animals (except perhaps for the domestic animals not mentioned here) has been changed by God’s imposition on them of literally the “terror” of man. Their newly-developed carnivorous appetites and other abilities inimical to close contact with man, combined with their more rapid multiplication, might otherwise have resulted in man’s extermination.

9:3 meat for you. For the first time, human beings are given divine permission to eat animal flesh. Initially, they were to have been vegetarians (Genesis 1:29). The reason for this change was due to the greater need for animal protein in man’s diet in view of the nutrient-impoverished soils of the post-diluvian world and the much more rigorous climatic conditions. A second reason may have been to emphasize the great gulf between man and the animals. Evolutionary and polytheistic philosophies, then as now, had seriously blurred that distinction (note Romans 1:21-25).

9:4 the blood thereof. The profoundly scientific truth that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (see also Leviticus 17:11) is here mentioned for the first time. This, as well as the other principles of the Edenic Mandate and the Noahic covenant, is still in effect and should be observed by Christians especially. The blood, both in symbol and in reality, is “the life of the flesh.” Thus, it is appropriate to offer in sacrifice (until the offering of Christ, that is) but never to consume, either as food or as a religious ritual.

9:5 will I require. If the blood of animals is to be regarded as too sacred to be eaten, since it represents the “life” (or “soul”—Hebrew *nephesh*) of the animal and is acceptable as a substitutionary sacrifice for man’s sins, how much more sacred is the blood of man himself! His blood represents *his* life and, since he alone is “in the image of God,” the Creator of life, man’s blood is not even to be shed, let alone eaten! If either man or beast slays a man, that man or that animal is, judicially, to be slain himself, the reason being the divine sacredness of human life.

9:6 blood be shed. This establishment of capital punishment, administered judicially by man, has never been changed or withdrawn. It is still God’s law today, and forms the basic authorization of the institution of human government. It implies also the enactment and enforcement of regulations for those human activities (e.g., stealing, adultery) which if unrestrained, would lead to murder. It does not stipulate the form, but only the fact of government. It extends the primeval mandate by giving man the responsibility to control not only the animals but his own society also. The original commission in effect had authorized the natural sciences and technologies; this new extension incorporated in God’s covenant with Noah in effect authorizes the social sciences and their technologies (e.g., psychology, law, sociology, anthropology, political science, government, police, criminology).

Although capital punishment is the proper prerogative of human society (“every man’s brother”) in so far as strict justice is concerned, mitigating circumstances (especially sincere repentance and restitution) may warrant extension of mercy in individual cases. Nevertheless, the basic right of

governments to exact capital punishment as penalty for murder cannot legitimately be abrogated as far as God is concerned. This is clear even in the Christian dispensation. The eating of meat (I Timothy 4:3,4), the abstinence from blood (Acts 15:19, 20) and the authority of the governmental sword (Romans 13:4; Acts 25:11) were reaffirmed to the early church, making it clear that the Noahic mandate still applied.

9:9 *my covenant.* The Noahic covenant (Hebrew *berith*) is the first covenant mentioned in Scripture and is everlasting (Genesis 9:16). It applied not only to Noah and his seed (Genesis 9:9), but also to the animal kingdom (Genesis 9:10) and even to the earth itself (Genesis 9:13). It was unconditional, promising the age-long endurance of the post-flood cosmos, and also reconfirming and amplifying God's primeval commission to mankind, involving human stewardship over the earth and its inhabitants.

9:13 *my bow.* The rainbow, requiring small water droplets in the air, could not form in the pre-diluvian world, where the high vapor canopy precluded rain (Genesis 2:5). After the Flood, the very fact that rainfall is now possible makes a worldwide rainstorm impossible, and the rainbow "in the cloud" thereby becomes a perpetual reminder of God's grace, even in judgment.

9:16 *everlasting covenant.* This is the first of sixteen references to an "everlasting covenant" made by God, and therefore to an unconditional, unbreakable promise. This first such everlasting covenant was made with "all flesh," and the second was with Abraham's seed (Genesis 17:7). The last was with all who are redeemed with the blood of Christ (Hebrews 13:20).

9:18 *Japheth.* The original meanings of these names are uncertain, but the most probable meanings are: Shem means "Name" or "Renown;" Ham means "Warm" or "Hot;" Japheth means "Enlarged" or "Beautiful."

9:19 *whole earth overspread.* This plain declaration (see also Genesis 10:32) leaves no possibility that any other people survived the worldwide Flood. All the world's present peoples are descendants of Noah's three sons and their wives. The gene pool from these six individuals (all originally from Adam and Eve, of course) provided far more than enough genetic variational potential to account for the wide range in national and tribal characteristics which have surfaced since the Flood. The world's present population of approximately six billion people likewise could easily have been developed in, say, 4000 years. An average annual growth rate of % (only one-fourth the present rate), or an average family size of only 2.5 children per family, could easily accomplish this.

9:21 *wine.* This is the first mention of wine in Scripture, but there is no reason to doubt that the antediluvians used wine and intoxicating beverages. Christ said they were characterized by much "eating and drinking" (Matthew 24:38). Although the vapor canopy filtered much of the harmful radiation from space, fermentation as a decay process had probably been controlled and utilized by man since soon after the Fall.

9:24 *done unto him.* Though Noah was guilty of the sin of carelessness and drunkenness, the sin of Ham was much more serious, revealing a hitherto suppressed carnal and rebellious nature, a resentment against his father and, probably, against God. Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, sought to cover and restore their father.

9:25 *Cursed be Canaan.* Noah's curse was spoken concerning Canaan instead of Ham for possibly one or more of the following reasons: (1) As Ham was his youngest son, so Canaan was Ham's youngest

son, and Noah wished to emphasize that the prophecy extended through Ham to all his seed, even his youngest; (2) Noah could gladly bless his two faithful sons, but could not bear to pronounce the prophetic curse *directly* on his other son, whom he also loved dearly; (3) He knew his grandsons well enough to recognize in the sons of Ham the same rebellious attitudes that were in Ham, and he knew that they would actually experience the resultant effects of his sin even more than would Ham himself.

9:25 *servant of servants.* The phrase “servant of servants” is never used elsewhere in Scripture. If it means “slave of slaves,” then the prophecy has failed, for neither the Hamitic nations in general nor the Canaanitic nations in particular have ever been such. The Hamites have included such great empires as Sumeria, Phoenicia, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc., and quite possibly the great Asian nations (China, Japan, etc.) as well. The word “servant,” however, is more often used in the sense of “steward,” so the prophecy more likely speaks of Ham’s descendants as superlative stewards. That is, all men were stewards of God’s created world, in the sense of exercising dominion over its resources; and Ham, with his physical and materialistic bent, would be especially effective in subduing the world and developing its resources. Since the ground had been cursed, however, this meant Ham’s lot would be uniquely associated with the physical world, thus itself becoming a curse. Noah’s statement, it should be remembered, was a prophecy and not an imprecation, given under divine inspiration and on the basis of Noah’s own insight into the developing characters of his sons and grandsons and, therefore, of their descendants. As a prophecy, this interpretation is fitting, since the Hamitic nations have, indeed, been the great explorers, cultivators, builders, navigators, tradesmen, inventors and warriors of mankind.

9:25 *unto his brethren.* It is obvious that his prophecy applies not only to Canaan but also to all of Ham’s descendants, for the following reasons: (1) its scope is obviously intended to be symmetrical, worldwide and age-long, with all the progeny of the three sons of Noah included; (2) if taken as applicable only to Canaan specifically, then it must also apply specifically only to Canaan’s brethren, who were Cush, Mizraim and Phut. Their descendants included the nations of Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya. Not only would such a judgment be unfair (it was Ham who sinned, not Canaan), but it was never fulfilled, since the Canaanites were never servants of the Libyans or Ethiopians, and only briefly of the Egyptians; (3) as a matter of fact, the descendants of Canaan, who included the Phoenicians and Hittites, were prominent nations through most of their history, not slave nations.

9:26 *Shem.* Noah associated Shem especially with the worship of Jehovah, recognizing the dominantly spiritual motivations of Shem and thus implying that God’s promised Deliverer would ultimately come from Shem. The Semitic nations have included the Hebrews, Arabs, Assyrians, Persians, Syrians and other strongly religious-minded peoples.

9:27 *enlarge Japheth.* The enlargement of Japheth was not to be primarily geographical (Hamitic and Semitic nations have been enlarged geographically as much as the Japhethites) but intellectual. The Japhetic peoples (Greeks, Romans, Aryans, Europeans) have largely supplied the philosophers and scientists of mankind. The tripartite nature of man (body, mind, spirit) is shared by every man and every nation. However, each man (and each nation) reflects one of these as a predominant characteristic. Noah recognized that Ham, Japheth and Shem were dominated, respectively, by physical, intellectual and spiritual considerations, and so could see prophetically that these attributes would likewise be emphasized in the nations descending from them. Thus, every nation would contribute its own part to the corporate life of mankind as a whole.

9:27 *tents of Shem.* Japheth was peculiarly God’s steward in the intellectual analysis and utilization of earth’s resources, and Shem was peculiarly His steward with respect to the propagation of God’s will and plan for mankind, especially the transmission of His saving Word. Both services would require an

adequate physical base from which to operate, and thus would require the stewardship of Ham in the physical world. Thus, Ham was steward to Shem and Japheth in their stewardship—in this sense also, he would be a servant of servants.