



The Sin of Ham and the Curse of Canaan, His Son

The ninth chapter of Genesis ends on a sad note. Noah's drunkenness places the opportunity for sin in front of Noah's middle son Ham, who then walks into that temptation by morally violating his father. The moral sin, which had been wiped from the Earth through the flood, is back inside the hearts of Noah's family. Sadly, there is no record of repentance, forgiveness or reconciliation between Ham and Noah. Instead, the result is a multi-generation curse of Ham's youngest son and descendants.

Two questions jump from this text:

1) What was Ham's sin? There are a number of theories which are listed below:

- The straight reading, which is normally the best reading of the text, indicates that Ham pornographically watched his drunken father and then mocked, ridiculed and disrespected Noah to his brothers.
- Other theories are:
 - Inappropriate activity between dad and son.
 - Possibility of incest with mom.
 - Castration (According to the Talmud).

God does not give us any more details about the sin. What is clear about Ham's sin is that it was a clear moral, relational violation and that the flood did not change the fact of man's sin nature. Ham's sin sadly corrupted his own heart and resulted in a permanent relational breakdown between Noah and Ham.

2) Why did Noah curse Ham's youngest son Canaan instead of Ham? Judgment on one's descendants is a common Biblical consequence of sin. When David sinned with Bathsheba a key part of the consequences was that four of his descendants would die and they did. The Bible sees sin as contagious and flowing down family lines. In the 10 commandments itself (Exodus 20:5-6) God talks about sin being visited on the third and fourth generations of those who reject God, but His love to thousands of generations of those who love Him. A key reason for us as believers to "clean up" our sin by repenting and asking Jesus to free us from that sin's pain and grasp is so our children will not be prisoners of that sin. As Genesis is being given to the nation Israel, the nation is being sent by God to cleanse the land of Canaan by expelling the Canaanites, whose sin began with Ham and is now "complete" (Genesis 15:16).

Some applications of this passage to our lives are as follows:

A) **Do not leave the seeds of sin for others to be tripped-up by.** Noah's vigilance could have protected Ham. We make sure that no evil of ours can tempt any family member. We should cleanse our homes of evil material or habits that the enemy can use against our children or grandchildren, such as printed material, unprotected internet access, evil movies or false religious material.

B) **Seek a clean heart.** There is no record in Genesis 9 that Ham ever repented and was cleansed from his sin. We can be though, if we truly confess sin, throwing it away, turning from it and praying through the things that control and weigh down our hearts.

C) **Forgive.** There is no record that Noah forgave Ham, but we can forgive and must forgive those who have injured us if we are to be free from their control over our lives.