

Free - Take One

Shaqah



*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

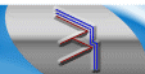
In our last segment, we ended by talking about Genesis chapter 9 verse 16 being like a song or poem which confirms God still loves us and is working for our good, and verse 16 is the true end to the story of what God had to do in sending a worldwide flood. Moving on to verse 17, we see a simple “note to the reader” - so to speak - about the fact all this information came in a direct conversation with Noah. It was not left to be wondered about in future generations. God made a covenant with all the earth that it would never happen again, and sealed it with a token which is the rainbow He set in the sky. If the flood of Noah's day was not truly a worldwide flood, there would have been no reason for God to promise this. Certainly, we see floods even of great magnitude today; but no matter how big the disasters which happen, they will never compare to what happened in Noah's day. God will never forget what He has promised, and neither should we!

God had done what He did, and verse 17 confirms the flood is truly behind man. The world would move forward from that point; and thus, we go to verse 18 which begins to tell us the story of where man went from there. First, we are told the names of the three sons of Noah, once again. This may seem like a, “It goes without saying” kind of thing, but it isn't really about what's there as much as it is about what is not there. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Jepheth. Noah and his wife may have been too old to have more children; but in any case, they did not conceive another child while on the ark. That fact takes us right into the fact we are told in verse 19, which is that all the earth was overspread by just these three sons. While Noah lived 350 years after the flood, (Gen. 9:28) he was not part of the new world's population growth. The three sons of Noah, whom he already had and who had gone with him through the flood, were responsible for all the people who carried human life forward on this planet.

On that note, verse 18 also mentions the fact Ham is the father of Canaan. Some believe this means Canaan (the son of Ham) was born by this time, but that is not realistic. Even if Canaan had been Ham's first-born, the verses never mention him as coming off the ark. Eight people came off the ark just as eight people went on. This verse is speaking of the beginning of man's journey post-flood, and Ham's sons were born later. In truth, I don't think this verse is talking at all about the son of Ham specifically. Instead, what it is referring to is the simple fact Ham would be the son of Noah who was responsible for bringing forth the Canaanites. This is important up-front information, because of the fact Shem would be the father who ultimately would lead to Abraham and the children of Israel. It was unto the children of Israel that this record would be entrusted. It would also be entrusted to them at a time when they were getting ready to face the Canaanites who lived on the land God had said He would give to Abraham's descendants. The children of Israel were the descendants who would receive that promise. In light of the story which is about to be given in the following verses, it was/is of particular interest to know even before the genealogy is read, that Ham is the father of the Canaanites.

The fact Ham is the father of Canaan is repeated in verse 22, and it is Canaan which is specifically mentioned by Noah in his prophecy concerning his sons, a bit later on. However, none of these references are specifically about Noah's grandson through Ham. These references have to do with the fact the world would be split into nations. The nations would be identified with the land they lived on and vice versa. Yes, Ham would name one of his sons Canaan, which may seem strange to some considering Noah cursed Canaan, but there is likely some reason why the name Canaan already related to Ham in a way we just don't appreciate. Names and the naming of children, even today, often follow a family pattern of using names over and over and/or recombining them. Family names are passed on more solidly by the use of a last name in many

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parts of the world today, as last names are automatically passed to children by their parents. In times gone by, they may not have used last names, but languages were very strong and meaningful. Because of this, there was a basis for extrapolating later names which had connection to previous generations and their names. Today, we just don't grasp this and see it as obvious. However, this kind of word usage, in many ways, follows the pattern of passing on family names just as we do even now. Thus, Noah's reference, and the mention of Canaan in these couple of verses, is talking about Ham as the father of all those who would be known as Canaan or the Canaanites in later centuries. Ham was not just the father of one son who later bore that specific name!

Again, verse 19 specifically tells us, it's by these three sons of Noah that the world is populated. Eighteen & nineteen not only point out facts which are good to know, but they lead us directly into the story that follows, which shows us Noah was ready for a quiet life of peace, not conquest or worldly success. We don't know for certain what Noah did as an occupation before the flood, but we know for the last century he had been a builder extraordinaire. During those years, Noah built what should be considered one of the wonders of the world; and not only was it something to behold, it actually functioned in the way it was intended. On this side of the flood, Noah did not continue practicing his extraordinary building abilities in any way that we know of. Unlike Cain, Noah did not go forth and build a city! (Gen. 4:17)

Verse 20 tells us, "And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:..." We should keep in mind that planting a vineyard would have been a long process of careful preparation and plant care. There would not have been established vines to transplant into Noah's vineyard. He would have needed to plant seedlings he found or propagate them from seed himself. It would have taken several years to get to verse 21 where it was even possible to drink large amounts of juices which came from the vineyard. This emphasizes the patience of Noah. He was not panicking about the world and how he could affect it, and/or move it "forward" before he died. Noah did not contribute to his family's lives and practices, which we later see leading people to build a tower and attempt to make a name for themselves. Noah was taking life one day at a time and no doubt communing with the God who had brought him this far. Noah understood this was the true purpose of life! (Acts 17:22-28)

As we begin looking at the events which start in verse 21, I have to say, I find it quite offensive that people look at the story told in these verses and talk about the one "stain" on Noah's record. This story is told to us to show Ham was of bad character, not Noah. Yes, verse 21 tells us there came a day when Noah's vineyard was able to produce enough juice that Noah was able to drink a considerable amount. However, I think the problem is, people get it in their mind that because we see the word "wine" used here, we are talking about the same kind of alcoholic product we know by that term today. People think Noah got drunk, and some even go so far as to believe and/or suggest this may have been typical behavior on

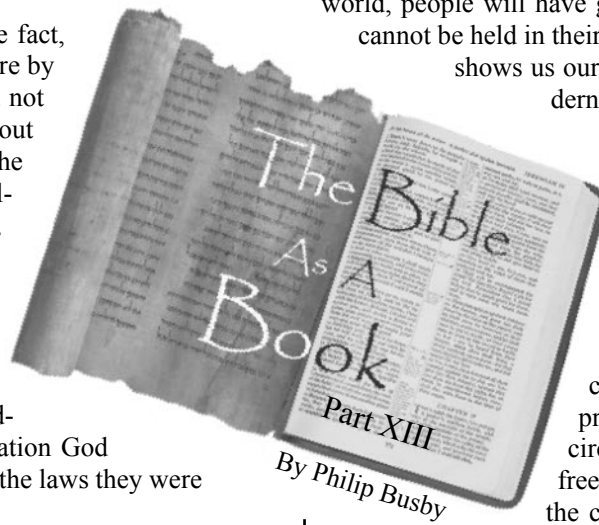
Noah's part. If you ask me, I think this has a lot to do with a true typical behavior we see in people all the time, and that is the fact people are always desiring to pick at every fault they find in the one who attempts to serve God with all their heart. Many believe by doing so they are justifying their own faults and failures, instead of realizing one has nothing to do with the other. There is no indication, even in this story, that Noah was some drunkard staggering around naked in the street. In fact, one of the whole points of the story is that this was a very isolated incident. We only know about it, because people not desiring righteousness take every opportunity they can dig up to point out everything they find as fault in others, who do desire righteousness. Ham found this incident something to jest about, because this is true.

Wine is wine, but all wine is not alcoholic. In our modern world we have refrigeration to preserve juices and the like. We also have the ability to make all kinds of things to drink which we enjoy, and which, because of their composition and packaging, will remain in the state they were produced for a very long time! In Noah's day, this was not the case. One of the few and more enjoyable things to drink, aside from your everyday water, was the juice from fruit, and it has long been known that one of the best fruits to get juice from is the grape. It's a simple fact that in spite of today's terminology, traditionally the juice you get from the fruit grown in a vineyard is called wine no matter how new or old it is, or how it's preserved. The problem is, you only have fruit, or at least specific kinds of fruit, during certain times of the year. It's kind of a use it or lose it thing. The fact we have what we call wine in our world today, which is alcoholic and comes in everything from fancy bottles to cardboard boxes, is a result of man's very early attempts to preserve fruit juice for later use and enjoyment.

The bottom line is, if Noah had actual alcoholic juice, it was not because he had went to the effort of storing his juice in an oak barrel for a time until it was right for putting in glass bottles and manipulating the yeast in order to produce an alcoholic product, which was considered to get better over a number of years. In truth, it's not likely Noah had drunk alcohol in this situation at all. The better likelihood is one of two things. Noah had tried to store some of the juice for later use and it had begun to spoil. People of the past did not have the luxury of turning up their noses at anything not considered reasonably fresh, as we do today. You did not throw out juice or food, of any kind, just because it was not the freshest thing around. The "wine" Noah was drinking may have gone bad in a way which Noah did not fully appreciate until he had drunk his fill. By then, he would have to suffer the consequences and wait for them to pass.

It's also possible Noah was in fact drinking very fresh juice, and it tasted so good, he did the kind of thing many children do come harvest time. I have had the privilege of living all my life in a place where we have had fruit trees on our property. My family has never, in any way, been a commercial operation, but on years when the fruit crop is good, there is little hope of keeping up with all the fruit we have. At

We talked last time about the fact, God did not set Pharaoh up for failure by only giving him an option he could not politically take. We also talked about the fact, if Pharaoh had allowed the children of Israel to go into the wilderness on just a few days journey, they would, in fact, have returned to Egypt. This in turn, would have caused Egypt to continue to be a great nation and an even greater nation as they followed God's leading, which would have been readily available to them through the nation God built from the children of Israel and the laws they were given.



How does that relate to our understanding of the Bible being given? Well, we need to understand while God had a more permanent plan for where Israel as a nation would be, God did not create a nation which had that permanency from day one. This is seen in the fact that even though events in Egypt turned out to be those of freeing Israel completely instead of Israel needing to return, God still started Israel in the wilderness with a very mobile setup. Now, some will again make the mistake of charging this mobility to the idea God knew Israel would not obey Him and He would cause them to stay in the wilderness for forty years; but again, this is accusing God of setting up people for failure. As we have been discussing, that is not how God works! God was setting up Israel to be what God wanted them to be. Yes, they had to spend an extra forty years in the wilderness, which God did not want them to have to spend; but what we should understand is, God was sending Israel on a journey in the first place.

This is how God stepped out Israel's development. Israel would travel into the wilderness where they needed to be in order to hear God's voice. In that wilderness, they would find that they did not have all the provisions they wanted. As we read the story, we should be clear, the people were never hungry or thirsty, in truth. The problem was that they feared if they went away from a place where there was food and water, they would not find more. (Ex. 16:1-3) Thus, they murmured against Moses on many occasions, and even though God would show them time and time again that providing for them, in any location, was not a problem for Him, they still had doubts and fears. What they needed to see was that God was setting them up to have a focus on the things God had brought them out into the wilderness to find, and they should have allowed God to take care of the everyday. This is something we all need to learn. (Matt. 6:25-34)

By looking at the doubts and fears we all struggle with, even when God makes His presence and power known, we can see the reasons why God wanted to set His Word among men in a tangible written form. Until, and only if, people can gain a trust in God as being much more than anything we know in this

world, people will have great difficulty with all things which cannot be held in their hands or direct control. Israel, again, shows us ourselves as they travel through the wilderness, even on a specific God-given mission, to obtain The Words of God which would be given for us all to read and hold it in our hands. This, of course, is what we have been leading to all along, and as we come to Exodus chapter 19 verse 1, we are told it was in the third month after leaving Egypt that Israel came to the mount where God would present His Word to them. Under the circumstances of Israel being totally freed from Egypt, God did not just take the children of Israel a few days journey into the wilderness. God was truly moving them on out and away from any thoughts of turning back to or depending on Egypt for any reason.

Finally, it would be here at Mount Sinai that God would speak to the children of Israel those very first and foremost words which are the foundation of what we call the written Word today! Moses was instructed to bring the people to the mount to hear these words with their own ears as God spoke them directly. It does not matter what else you may know or not know about the Word of God. It does not matter if you are Jew or non-Jew, these very first instructions, which would also be written in stone by the finger of God for Israel to carry with them, are the basis of living. God would give Israel a lot of instructions as to how they were to be a nation and how individuals were to conduct themselves as part of that nation. Those further laws would serve as an example of how we should all approach a relationship with God. However, here at the mount, Israel was not a nation following a kosher diet, or presenting itself before a temple maintained by a priesthood. Israel was not even truly a nation as yet. They were a group of people who, yes, from the time of their forefathers they had been slated to be God's chosen nation; but again, the choices they would make would determine if they would truly get to where God wanted them to go or not! The very first choice they would have to make is the same choice every human needs to make in life, and that is, do we agree that we should follow, value, and respect the fundamental laws God set up human existence to run on?

We have talked more than once in this study about the two greatest commandments. We have also talked about the fact God gave humanity a free will so we could determine how we wanted to conduct our lives. At the same time, God set up some basic principles which were meant to be followed no matter which direction we chose to take. These principles cannot be sidestepped without consequences, and the reasons should be obvious. The Ten Commandments are an expanded look at the principles contained in the two greatest commandments. They are principles which, with the knowledge of good and evil, we should already, clearly understand and even be able to extrapolate for ourselves. However, God would not leave these ten to

be acknowledged by man any longer. God would speak these ten directly to His nation and leave no doubt as to these being the fundamentals of human existence. To further emphasize the point, God would also literally write these ten in stone! Thus, I say again, the Ten Commandments are the foundation of the written Word; and the fact they were written down by God Himself shows us they are of no small matter. Israel could not begin to be the nation God wanted them to be if they did not agree with the principles all people in this world should be following as just an unavoidable fact of life!

Now, some like to say the commandments were laid out in order of importance and that is not untrue. However, when you have only ten commandments, it should be obvious they all hold a very high place in this world and how it should be conducted. The first four of these commandments are a basic expansion on the true golden rule which is that we love The Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The next six are an expansion on the silver rule which is that we love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:34-40) We could do an extensive study about these ten, but we will leave that for another study in and of itself. In this study, we will simply take a look at them to help us see why they are the fundamental principles God asks of each of us, and why they are the foundation of the written Word.

If we start with the first commandment, we see the words: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3 As humans, we may find many things hold a godlike status in our lives. You may say, I don't have any gods in my life because I don't pray to anything other than God, and I don't bow down to anything. However, that aside, there are still things we desire; things we revere; and things we fear. Any of these things can and often do hold a place of authority in our lives. In spite of our free will, we allow these things to dictate our actions and choices even in ways which we would never allow God to. These things can be things of society, family, friends, even hobbies and pets we choose to have. There is simply no end to what we might choose to do or be a part of in life which will dictate our actions to one degree or another. With the very first commandment, God is not attempting to define any specific things which may or may not be in an individual's life. God is not telling us we must never yield our will for whatever reason to other pressures or things. What God simply makes clear is that through it all, the things He asks of us should reign supreme, and supersede everything else in our lives! If we will truly take this to heart in everything we do, the argument of having other gods in our life will take care of itself as God leads us into the correct path for our lives.

The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,..." Exodus 20:4 Now, what we have quoted here is only the first line of this commandment, which makes it very clear we should not look to the powers of nature or anything around us and make objects in order to worship them. This commandment, again, speaks to the aspect that we may fear or revere things such as the power of nature, the skills of an animal, the abilities of another human, etc. We may struggle with not allowing these to be gods in our lives, but what God tells us is key is that we do not go to the physical effort of making images which represent these things in order

to specifically worship them. If we do this, we jump a fence which clearly takes us out of the realm of respect and/or fear and into the realm of recognizing the thing we observe as a god and not simply part of creation. (Rom. 1:18-25) This can certainly get in the way of loving God with everything we are, because you cannot serve two masters. (Matt. 6:24) The activity of creating objects and calling them gods, even if we believe we are representing God Himself, can also be a stumblingblock to others, leading them away from The One True God and Him holding the top spot in their lives! Along with that, is the fact the object will likely outlast us, affecting even future generations who may or may not understand your intent in making the object. (Rom. 14:13)

The third commandment says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;..." Exodus 20:7 This may be the most widely understood commandment. Many believe this one simply has to do with respect, and while that is certainly true, it also has to do with a nature in us which is very deeply entrenched. We were created to follow God's guidance on a daily basis. We were created to have God, much like a parent, teaching and showing us the right way through and how to handle all we encounter in life. This is an expectation of the human mind and spirit and it's shown in the way we react, especially to negative events in our lives. The problem is that we, even as those who claim to follow God, have allowed our free will to get in the way of God's guidance and direct interaction with God. It started with the taking of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and it has only grown worse as this world has rejected God more and more. We need to realize it is our choices in life and the choices of others which cause harm and misery. Our instinct may be to blame God for everything which goes wrong, because there is a part of us which understands He is suppose to be The One in charge, but God is not making all the choices in this world. The fact this is ultimately unworkable is exactly why God allows us to leave this world through death, and why those who desire God's direct leading are promised a place where God's guidance will once again be true in the way God created it to be in this universe! (Gen. 3:22, John 14:1-3)

The fourth commandment is the last of the four which deal more exclusively with loving God with everything you are. I often say, "I could write a book on this subject or that subject," but in this case I don't have to because in point of fact, I have written a book on this subject called, *A Sabbath By Design*. From creation, God gave man six days to do with as he desired, but the seventh day He took for Himself. This has direct relationship with what we talked about last time in discussing the difference between eternal life which is permanent, and living forever here by taking from the Tree of Life. In the end of all things here, God will take all those who truly desire Him to a place where being with Him will be the whole point. However, in this world, God allowed man a free will even before sin, which gave man the opportunity to have significant separation from God and still have access to the Tree of Life. All we had to do was yield to God's enforcement of a handful of principles, which are covered here in the Ten Commandments, and not do the one thing He told us specifically not to do. However, even that was/is asking too much for many people, and it is seen in their rejection of, even, these ten simple laws on a daily basis.

In the fourth commandment, all God asked of man was that he recognize the seventh day belongs to God: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8 No matter how far from the Garden of Eden we roamed and no matter how often we chose to return to God's direct presence or have it with us right where we were, every Sabbath day was to be a time of setting aside whatever one was doing and remember that day belonged to The God Who created us! Even after man fell into sin, this point remained an unshakable truth of our creation, and is very relevant to us right up to this very day!

Now, due to sin, even the children of Israel may have forgotten when the Sabbath day occurred; but they were shown in the wilderness, even before they made it to this mount to hear God's voice, there is a specific seventh day which belongs to God. It existed even before these commandments were written down, and they were to remember it. How were they shown what day that was to be? As the children of Israel feared they would have nothing to eat, God sent manna to feed them in the wilderness. They were to collect only what they could eat in one day and keep nothing till the morrow. If they did try to keep it, it became something very foul! However, this rule had one exception - the Sabbath! On the sixth day, they could and were supposed to collect enough for two days so they would not have to gather manna on the Sabbath. Those who did not collect enough on day six to last them through the Sabbath, found there simply was no manna to collect on the Sabbath! (Ex. 16:12-31) Israel lived with this weekly example until they observed Firstfruits, for the first time, in the promised land. (Josh. 5:10-12) The Sabbath is not a day to do what we desire, it is a time to, at the very least, reflect on what God created us to be!

Number five of the commandments takes us into those which, while still relating to loving God by honoring how He created us to live, they relate more directly to the silver rule of loving others as yourself. Number five says: "Honour thy father and thy mother:..." Exodus 20:12 This commandment shows us so much that we could teach human interactive dynamics for pages just from this commandment! There really should be no wonder at the fact it's the lead commandment as we step into those relating directly to the silver rule. There is no more basic, and yet more overwhelmingly huge responsibility which God granted us the free will to choose for ourselves, than our ability to choose how many other humans will share this universe with us! "...male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27

I have been asked at times to write on the subject of "Family Values," and the point which I believe should be talked about more than any other item which is considered a "family value" is that the greatest value is to value the family! At the heart of how we relate to others is the fact we are all the son or daughter of two people. Even in a world which has attempted to skew this with technics such as in vitro fertilization done with just any set of donor's elements, the fact remains we have a mother and a father. Aside from that is the fact that whether we know our parents or not, there must be people who raise us. Babies are amazing beyond most people's comprehension, but they just can't make it on their own in this world. From the moment of conception until they are old enough to fend for

themselves, they need care, and there is a bonding which takes place between a child and the person(s) who does that job. The simple point is, if God had not intended two people consisting of male and female to be the ones which primarily do this job, we might just have seen children growing in cabbage patches instead of coming from a physical act which only a male and female can accomplish naturally.

The first thing any human should be able to see is the value in the simple fact God created a family structure consisting of a male and female in a lifelong commitment to one another, as the proper way to have and raise children. Sure there are those who, because of sin's destruction in this world, will not for one reason or another have that. There are those who, because of sin, will not have good parents; but that takes nothing away from the fact that is how God created it to be and it has the greatest potential. This is why God says to honor your father and mother. It's not something for parents to have a power trip over, it's a truth of life that we should value the family structure. This does not mean we all must get married and have children. This is why father and mother are mentioned instead of something such as spouse. Again, we are all someone's children, and no matter how we were raised, no matter what we desire as adults, we should value and honor the facts God established at creation as having the greatest potential for humans to begin their life and interaction with others!

The sixth commandment takes us from the beginnings of life to the subject at the other end of things, and it should be the most obvious of them all. Many people may not see how not honoring the family structure God created us to run on disrupts society, but no one should be able to miss how not honoring life in general is unacceptable! That is why this commandment is four simple words: "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13

The seventh commandment relates directly back to the fifth. It simply states: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14 Many people have come to interpret the word "adultery" as something very narrow. People will tell you adultery refers to not cheating on your spouse. The problem is, they believe you have to have a spouse for this to happen and that is not true. If you are having a physical relationship with someone you have not made a life commitment to, you are already cheating on the person you intend to marry later on! On top of this, there is the truth the Bible explains to us which is when you have a physical relationship with a person of the opposite sex, you are binding yourself to that person and becoming one flesh. (Gen. 2:21-24, I Cor. 6:16-18) Thus, the attitude of, I'll have a physical relationship now and marriage later, is a ridiculous one. Even if you sign a bill of divorcement after marriage and live completely separate from each other, you are not free to go out and be with another. This too is still adultery. (Matt. 5:31-32, Mark 10:4-12) Marriage is a commitment for as long as ye both shall live. When we do not see adultery as any physical relationship outside that bond, we create big problems, which are obvious in families the world over.

This commandment definitely shows us the love thy neighbor as thyself, in a daily kind of way. When we have a physical relationship with someone of the opposite sex (It should go

without saying, that being with someone of the same gender is nothing more than a promiscuous act.), there is the possibility of a child being developed. Lets face it, that's just how God created it to be; and even when using what many have come to call "protection" now days, it still happens at times. Once a child is conceived - that's right, conceived not born - that child is the responsibility of the parents. Not taking on that responsibility is a clear violation of not loving even a neighbor on this planet, which you should love without a doubt. This is why it should be inconceivable - especially to one who truly believes in the ways of God - that a parent would not only be willing to kill a child before it is ever born, but desirous to do so just because they do not want that child for one reason or another! The fact humans can degrade to such a horrible state of thinking that they would desire to kill their own children, makes it very pointed that the commandment not to kill is sandwiched in-between the two which have to do directly with the family unit!

Commandment number eight says: "Thou shalt not steal." Exodus 20:15 This too should be obvious as to why it's not workable in a world where people share space and time. You can't be allowed to take what belongs to others and expect life to be reasonably livable. No society can survive which does not believe in this principle. Even when we allow governments to ignore this principle in the name of taxation or the general good of the many, our ability to interact with each other on a reasonable level falls to pieces. Financial institutions, governments, individuals, and everything in this world does great harm when we allow the theft of property from another group or individual.

Number nine instructs: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Exodus 20:16 This is the thou shalt not lie commandment. This should also be as plain as the nose on your face, but this one is actually one people like to twist about as far as you can. People say there is such a thing as a "little white lie," which is to say, there are actually lies which do good! This may seem true in the short term, but it's not true in the grand scheme of things. Bearing false witness of any event, person, fact, etc. is never doing good. You can refuse to say anything, but, again, a society cannot survive in proper order when people feel free to tell things as they please instead of telling what actually happened to the best of their knowledge. There are levels of trust which can never be regained or obtained in the first place when we feel the truth is relative or flexible. If people are going to interact with each other and be able to learn and grow in life, people must be able to trust one another; and that starts with what we say being reliable information about what we know, what we believe, and the actions we will take. Of course, we are all aware of how harmful some lies can be, but when considering the idea a little lie won't hurt, we should understand that just because poking someone with a needle does less damage than using a hunting knife, it's still wrong, and even small injuries add up to big-time hurt!

The last commandment is why we need to understand that while it may be true the Ten Commandments are listed in an order of priority to some degree, there are still only ten, which means they are all of great priority! Number ten tells us: "Thou

shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:17 Loving our neighbor as ourselves means when we look at the things our neighbor(s) has which we desire to have, we should not resent our neighbor for having those things. If we would like to have them, then we certainly can not judge the fact another has them, and if we know the item is something we should not have, then desiring them, especially on the basis others have them, is truly wrong!

This commandment also takes us all the way back to the top of these commandments and the fact we are to have no other gods before The One True God. Just as a general rule, we have trouble first and foremost with allowing other things to control our thinking and choices. We allow things to take on authority and priority in our lives, and often it's for the wrong reasons. As I said in covering the first commandment, putting God first above all other things should take care of the problem of having other gods, by allowing God to remove from our lives those things which are destructive. That being said, the Bible makes it clear what the dynamics of sin are.

Sin comes from the initial fact we lust for things. (James 1:13-15) We have enough trouble in that if there was no one else on this planet, we would still be drawn away from the things of God by the fact our flesh would rather focus on its own comfort, our eyes would behold things we just had to obtain, and the very fact we are alive empowers and emboldens us to believe we don't need God, and/or that the things of this life are important above Him. When we find ourselves battling with lust, it can conceive numerous sins and downfalls in our lives. However, there is nothing so meaningless in this life, and as a use of your time and energy, than to want and work to obtain something because someone else already has it! You are suppose to love your neighbor as yourself, not base what you want and strive for in life on what your neighbor has. In coveting, you are destroying your ability to develop as an individual for who you are. Your goals in life become based on having things others have just because they have them and not necessarily because you even want them. It's the epitome of worshiping objects, people, and the pride of life, instead of God. It also leads to hatred, malice, and many other negative feelings in your life which certainly do not line up with loving others!

We can break the Bible down into books. We can break it down into chapter and verses. We can debate about what should be canonized as true scripture, and what should be left out as reference material, at best. However, we can not and should not attempt to deny that if for any reason God had not been able to get the children of Israel to hear, live and hold for the entire world, any other instructions, God made sure these Ten Commandments were heard, and written down. Is there authority in the Bible? Yes, and we just covered the written principles which the entire rest of the Bible is nothing without!

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 2

times, we have sold fruit and still had more than we could preserve through canning or use by just eating. My grandma used to literally stand at the window of her home and fret over the fruit her neighbors allowed to just fall on the ground. She used to say, "I just can't stand to see good food go to waste." This certainly stuck with me; and on those years when fruit is more abundant than we could/can keep up with, there is not just the temptation to eat it in excess, but a feeling of responsibility not to let it go to waste. I can recall more than one time in my life when, for these thoughts I would eat fruit to my heart's content. At the time this is pleasant and can even seem like a good idea. However, in the end, there are consequences to eating too much fresh fruit all at once! This is not like eating spoiled fruit, it's that fresh fruit is so good for you it does what my grandma used to call "cleaning you out." Even if you can handle the sudden rush of cleansing very easily digestible fruit can bring, it's going to cause a fair amount of cramps and pain!

Noah made a mistake - at best - in that he drank more juice than he should have. Just the sugar content alone can have an affect on the body, and all these affects can be technically described as "drunk" in spite of the fact we reserve that word for alcoholic intoxication today. In drinking too much, Noah was uncomfortable and maybe what you might describe as downright sick. Because of this, he went into the privacy of his own tent to deal with the problem. Noah was not wearing his clothes as he went to sleep inside his tent, but that does not mean he was laying full-out naked, nor that he did it because he was out of his mind. A tent is not a modern house with indoor plumbing for toilets and showers. People did not necessarily have a closet full of clothes, nor did they have washers and dryers for their clothes. If Noah was having trouble of any kind due to the fact he had drunk more juice all at once than he should have, he would have wanted to be comfortable and practical, as he recovered from the mistake. That is precisely what was going on when Ham walked in on him.

As we look at Ham's actions in verse 22, we also need to realize the word "nakedness" in this context does not necessarily mean full nudity, nor is it talking exclusively about nudity. In fact, many times when the Bible uses this word it is not talking exclusively about nudity. Often the word is used to denote something private. To say, Ham saw his father's "nakedness," is to say, Ham witnessed his father in a condition or moment which was private and should not have been seen by others, no matter how covered or uncovered his father's actual body may or may not have been. Now, in all honesty Ham may very well have made a mistake as well. As he came to Noah's tent, he may have called for his father and not waited for a response. He may have attempted to get his father's attention, and when he couldn't, Ham may have been truly concerned, and decided to look inside the tent without thinking about the fact he might be violating his father's privacy, in a big way. We just don't know for sure and it does not matter, because in any case, Ham jumped from what may

have been a mistake to what was truly an act of inconsideration, at best, in choosing to go out and tell the rest of the family about what he saw!

In our modern world, we may not care very much about modesty or even privacy, but in Noah's family it would have been very keen. It would have been a great embarrassment to Noah for his son to see him in the state he was in. On top of this, Noah was not just the father of these three sons, he was truly the patriarch of the world at this point. As I mentioned earlier, it would have taken some time to establish a vineyard and get an abundance of fruit from it. We don't know how many of Noah's grandchildren were born at this time, but it's likely there were at least some. If Ham had accidentally walked in on his father, he should have, at the very least, kept it to himself so as not to embarrass his father. If Ham had later told his father in private what he had done and asked for his father's forgiveness, I'm sure Noah would have easily given it to him. However, for Ham to go out and begin to spread what he saw, among the family, he was establishing an embarrassing story about this one righteous man who served God with all his heart, which would continue for generations. That truth brings us full circle to what I started this story by saying. The simple fact this story is conveyed for the sake of teaching future generations has caused people to believe there is a "stain" on Noah's record as a righteous man. Talk about missing the point!

Verse 23 shows us the contrast in respect Shem and Japheth had for their father as opposed to Ham; and some may ask, if Noah was in his tent, why did the brothers do what they did? Well, the fact Ham had come out and made such a big deal about Noah's condition made Noah vulnerable in a way he should not have been, especially among his family. Shem and Japheth wanted to make sure no one else could go and see for themselves what Ham was talking about. They also knew their father would hear about what happened, and it would make him feel better to wake up knowing the matter had been dealt with, instead of leaving Noah wondering just how many others may have done what Ham did. Thus, even Shem and Japheth were careful to go in backward so they could honestly say they had not seen their father in doing what they did. These are the actions of sons who honored their father!

Verse 24 says Noah woke from the sleep he had went into because of the wine, and some have suggested that knowing what his younger son had done, or at least the curse he lays out, did not come until later in Noah's life. However, even though this verse does not make it specifically clear the moment by moment account of what Noah did next, there is no reason to doubt the events unfolded just as they are told here in a sequence that was not interrupted by a lot of time or other life events. Telling us Noah woke from this specific incident and knew what his younger son had done, I believe is a conformation that Noah woke up and found the answer to the question of how he had come to be covered up with a garment. It was not days, months or years later that he found the truth. The simple fact Shem and Japheth respected their

father enough to cover him, dictates the likelihood that they told Noah the truth sooner rather than later.

Now, many people do not care about how or when Noah found out what had transpired during his sleep, but they argue that the curse which comes in verse 25 possibly did not come until many years later. This is based again, in no small part, on that idea that the reference to Canaan is speaking specifically about Ham's son. They argue it would not have been until later in life, perhaps upon Noah's death bed, that he would have laid out such a curse, especially concerning a grandson. We know that such blessing and cursing traditionally did take place when an elder felt he might be close to death, and we see this in the life of people such as Isaac, (Gen. 27:1-4) and again with Jacob. (Gen. 48-49) However, I say again, I do not believe Noah was cursing Canaan as in his grandson; thus, there was no need for this to take place later down the road in order for Canaan to be born, or Noah to be close to death.

We must remember, Noah was a righteous man and God makes it clear in the Torah that the sins of the father shall not be put on the son. (Deut. 24:16) Noah's grandson is not mentioned even once as having anything to do with this incident. Noah had no reason to specifically curse him. Noah also had no reason to wait to lay down this curse, and to believe he did, is to miss another point of the story. Noah cursed Canaan, but more than being the type of curse like we think of as being given by a witch or the like, Noah was giving instructions as much as anything else. Noah was not spinning black magic here or speaking on God's behalf about a judgment God was going to put on one of Ham's specific children. This was not a curse on Ham which would haunt his descendants and bring them bad fortune. Noah was saying that Ham's descendants were cursed because they had a father such as Ham! Now, that's steep and something many would see as very harsh to say to one's own child. However, Ham was not a child and Noah was doing his part as a patriarch. If Ham was the kind of man this incident showed he was, that was not a good thing for future generations of both his family line as well as those of Shem and Japheth. Remember, Noah, of all people, was clear on why God had to send a flood to destroy the world. Noah knew better than anyone the destruction sin can bring, not just to an individual's life but the world as a whole! Noah also knew these things do not happen overnight. Sin can bring destruction in an individual's life which can seem like an isolated incident, but there are also long-term building effects which only grow in intensity.

Ham would set the tone for his family line and the way they would live their lives. If he was not a righteous man, his overall family would not tend toward righteousness, and they would ultimately build the kind of world God had to destroy. This is why Noah points out that Ham's family would be servants of servants. It's also why Noah goes on in verse 26 to mention Shem. Noah tells his family that Shem is the one who is on the right path, just as Adam and Eve's son Abel

was, and later their grandson Enos who came through Seth. (Heb. 11:4, Gen. 4:25-26) The One True God is identified by Noah as, "...the Lord God of Shem;..." Saying Canaan shall be his servant is not so much a curse as we think of it, or even an unshakable prophesy, so much as it is a truth both Ham's and Shem's line should look at. If Ham's line was not going to be one of righteous people, then they needed to be taught, not be teachers. Ham's line should be servants, not leaders in the world. Ham's line should be under people such a Shem's family which could teach them the ways of righteousness they did not get from their forefather. If that meant Ham's lineage ceased to be recognized as a specific people separate from his brother's line, then so be it!

The same thing rings true when looking at verse 27. There Noah points out something familiar about the way so many Biblical families unfolded. The eldest brother would be enlarged, meaning He would not be left without blessings in this world and life, but he too would not be the leader. Japheth would dwell in the tents, or under the cover of his younger brother Shem. To make things clear, Ham's descendants would also be Japheth's servants. So there is a trickle down effect of sorts in the way this should unfold. By being the servants of Japheth who lived in the tents of Shem, Ham's line truly becomes servants of servants. Noah was setting the place for each family in the world, not according to the way they were born, but in the way they were lining up in respect to righteousness.

Now, all this is not to say there are forces in this world at work which insure things come out right as they should. God does not insure that the good people always rise to the top, while the bad sink. In truth, the real point in this is to tell Noah's children it would be up to them. The good should fight to overcome the bad. They should not allow the world to unfold in a way which simply allows the wrong to go about its business, or define how the world operates. Noah is talking about justice, in many ways, and the fact it would be up to his two God fearing sons to carry out that justice. I'm not suggesting Noah was establishing the idea of empire, or government. However, Noah is talking about respecting the things of God, and not simply allowing the bad to take over this world as it had done before the flood. He wanted those in the right not to just stand aside or even go along with the bad. Noah shows he is truly a righteous man by judging in this manner. In the end result, because Noah is in-step with the way God judges, Noah's words are truly prophetic. Shem's descendants would eventually be given the Laws of God to show forth to the world. It was an unrighteous Canaanite population Israel was to drive from the promised land; and if we jump way ahead in the Word, we see, ultimately, The Messiah will one day return as The King - not just of Israel - but the entire world!

Until next time, Shalom!