

Genesis 9:20-27 ²⁰ And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. ²⁵ Then he said: "Cursed *be* Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren." ²⁶ And he said: "Blessed *be* the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."

Look Away to Jesus

Is this account about Noah's sin or Ham's? Trick question, it is about your sin. This wasn't written for Noah or Ham, they were dead long before this was written by the Holy Spirit through Moses. This was written for you. The Hebrew reveals that Ham didn't just see his father passed out and naked on the floor, he looked at it with amusement and went and told his brother with delight. He thought his father's sin and shame was funny and delighted to tell other people about it. His brothers however did not think it was funny and in love for their father and their God, they, as best as they were able, covered his shame. They kept the 4th commandment honoring their father. They kept the 5th commandment being a help to him in his bodily need. They kept the 8th commandment by not speaking evil of their father. They kept the 1st commandment doing this not just in love for their father but primarily in love for their God and they thus

kept the 2nd commandment bringing honor to God's name. Ham on the other hand broke all those commandments. The 4th, the 5th, the 8th, the 1st, and 2nd. What Ham did was great evil.

Now maybe you are wondering what does this have to do with you? None of you have seen your father dead drunk and naked on the floor, or at least I hope you haven't, and what does this have to do with Jesus' transfiguration which we are celebrating today? Well they are very much connected. You might not have seen what Ham saw but you have seen people behaving badly have you not? You have seen other people do stupid and foolish and shameful and sinful things and haven't you, like Ham, gossiped, told others about it to get a laugh, to get some attention, to get even, or to feel better about yourself, instead of keeping the 8th command and speaking well of them and explaining all their words and actions in the best possible way?

There is a devil in all of us, it is called our sinful nature. When the Holy Spirit claimed your heart for Christ through His Holy Word that devil was caged. But the demon is constantly getting loose and even when it is caged it is constantly clawing at

its' bars seeking to be get loose and sink its teeth into others, Tell them how stupid they are being, Tell others about the foolish thing, especially if that person hurt us in the past.

How can we keep the demon who is our own natural sinful nature, kept in his cage? How can we, as I Corinthians 13 directs, not rejoice in iniquity as Ham did but bear and endure all things even if someone is attacking our character? How can we be like Japheth and Shem and follow *Proverbs 10:12* "lover covers all sin". How can we remember to follow *Proverbs 15:1* "A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."?

There is one thing that stops our sinful nature in its tracks, that pins us down in the midst of us gossiping, speaking unkindly to others or about others, that is the sight of Jesus, our God, glorious and holy.

Now you might say that we weren't there on the Mount of Transfiguration to see the holiness of our God, but we can see the holiness of God. We can see it manifested on that mount through the Words the Holy Spirit recorded. We see how when Jesus' true nature was revealed, He was glorious and Holy they couldn't look

right at him. Too bright for their eyes and too bright for their souls for Jesus holiness shows us just how unholy we are. We can also see Jesus' holiness and glory manifest every minute of His life that Scripture records for us . ***1 Peter 2:22-23*** "*Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

The sight of Jesus stops us in our tracks and shows us that what we are doing is not good but evil, not justified but condemned. The sight of Jesus reveals what you are. We are Ham. We are evil. We are cursed.

If you were paying close attention you might notice however that it is not Ham who is cursed but Canaan. Canaan was one of Ham's four sons. Perhaps you think that unfair that Canaan is being punished for the sin of his father. But that isn't really what is going on here. The evilness that Ham showed here, Ham's son Canaan would have even more so and his descendants still more so. The descendants of Canaan were the Canaanites. Sound familiar? They were also called the Ammorites and included the people of Sodom

and Gomorrah. The evilness that Ham shown was their way of life. This is what God had to say about them in Deuteronomy 12:31 *“for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.*” Noah speaks by prophecy and reveals the fate of the descendants of Ham’s son Canaan. Because of their great evil they would be destroyed. God would give their land to the children of Israel and use the children of Israel to wipe them off the face of the earth and all that were left would be slaves to the Israelites who were the descendants of Shem.

A terrible fate, but even a partial glimpse at the holiness of our God will make us understand they deserved it, and makes you understand you deserve it. We deserve to be destroyed completely and utterly in body and soul by God for the evilness of Ham is in our hearts even though you are all probably descendants of Japheth and not of Ham. It was the descendants of Japheth who colonized Europe. Yet despite that, the evilness of Ham dwells in your heart for we are all descendants of Adam and Eve and from them the curse of sin, and the curse of sin comes to all. The sight of Jesus,

holy on the mountain, holy in His whole life in whom the Father was well pleased, shows us what we are - ones in whom God is not pleased, ones like Ham, ones like Canaan. Look at Jesus and see what you are - nothing, an ant a worm an evil sinner. Look on his holiness and tremble and despair.

But..... that is not all there is to see. Ham should not have kept looking and found joy in his father’s shame but we should keep looking at Jesus’ holiness and found joy in His Holiness. Who stood beside Jesus and talked with joy of the things that were about to happen in Jerusalem? Moses and Elijah. They too had the evilness of Ham in their hearts, the sinful heart that has come down to every descendant of Adam and Eve. They should not have been in heaven enjoying eternal life and all things good at the side of God, yet there they were? How was it possible? Because blessed be the Lord the God of Shem.

Did you notice that difference? Canaan was cursed but Shem was not blessed, the God of Shem was blessed. Why? Because Noah through prophecy knows and foretells that the Savior of all men would come from Shem. All that Shem and for that matter, Japheth,

did on this occasion was good and right but they too had sinned in their lives, in fact on a daily basis. They too, like us, deserved a curse but in the Savior God would send, they would receive a blessing. So yes, blessed be the God of Shem. Blessed be our God. He stood on the Mount of Transfiguration revealing His Godhead, His power, His glory and His holiness to the disciples and to us. Jesus' holiness reveals to all men what they are - sinful and evil but to those in whom the Holy Spirit has created faith, His holiness reveals something else as well - what God has blessed us with. God the Father is well pleased with us too, in Jesus. Jesus was our substitute in death and also in holiness. He became man to die for you and be holy for you so that Elijah and Moses and us can share in a glory and holiness and life that we by nature don't deserve.

Blessed be the God of Shem. Blessed be our God for He has caused us, the descendants of Japheth, to dwell in the tents of Shem. Are you confused? I hope so, if you aren't, you are probably aren't listening. I just praised God for causing us to live in tents and not even our own, but the tents of Shem. Now I like camping and perhaps some of you do to but do you want to live your whole life

in a tent? Yes you do when we are talking about the tents of Shem. Shem was the ancestor of Abraham and Israel. When Noah here speaks of Shem's tent, he is talking about having God's Word and knowing the one true God and knowing of the one true Savior Jesus, through faith so that the one True God is your God. We the Gentiles, the descendants of Japheth, have here in the New Testament times by the grace of God come to dwell in Shem's tents. We have God's Word and through it, we see our Savior and believe in Him so one day like Moses and Elijah we can stand beside Jesus in life and glory.

Like Shem and Japheth, look away, look away from others shame and foolishness. Look away to adding to that sin by your own and look toward Jesus your savior. Holy and perfect. He is not delighted to see your sin. Nor has He with glee told others all the shameful things you have done. By Jesus' life and death, the Father forgives and forgets. We dwell in the tents of Shem. Yes indeed, blessed be the God of Shem. Blessed be the God of us. Amen.

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