

## Introduction

The current administration of our country is trying to 'reinvent' government. Perhaps it would be helpful if they would first *rediscover* the basic principles of government - - three of which are found here in Genesis Nine.

The incidents you read of in our text can all be related to a single theme. They all involve **government** of one sort or another:

v God's covenant to Noah and his descendants, in verses one through seventeen, establishes **public government** - - the delegated power by which men exercise and execute judgment over one another.

v The incidents described in verses eighteen through twenty-three involve both Noah's and Ham's *lack* of self-control; they involve what you might call **personal government** - - the power by which you exercise discipline over yourself.

v Verses twenty-four through twenty-nine contain a remarkable outline of the future history of the world's peoples and nations; this is **prophetic government** - - the power by which history unfolds as His - story!

What the leaders of our country desperately need to rediscover is the following:

- #1 Public Government Rests  
In The Power Of God's Sword
- #2 Personal Government Requires  
The Power Of God's Spirit
- #3 Prophetic Government Reveals  
The Power Of God's Sovereignty

- #1 Public Government Rests  
In The Power Of God's Sword  
(v1-17)

These verses mark the establishment of **public government**. Public government is God's delegated authority to mankind to exercise and execute judgment. It's power rests in the use of force to enforce the laws. Paul the Apostle says in Romans 13:4, speaking of those in public government,

"... if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the *sword* in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."

The power of the sword - including ultimately capital punishment - is the fundamental basis for human government.

Dr. Henry Morris -

"The authority for capital punishment implies also the authority to establish laws governing those human activities which if unregulated could lead to murder - robbery, adultery, the usurpation of property boundaries (etc.)...Thus this simple instruction to Noah is the basis for all human legal and government institutions"<sup>1</sup>

Whether we agree or not, public government rests in the power of the sword - in the use of force to enforce its laws upon its citizens - including the mandate of capital punishment.

The context for mandating capital punishment is God's respect for life! Capital punishment *teaches mankind to respect life*.

v It teaches respect for the life of the unborn (v1)

Genesis 9:1 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

This assumes a respect for the unborn future generations who, you learn in v6, are made "in the image of God."

v It teaches respect for animal and plant life (v2-4)

Genesis 9:2 "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.

Genesis 9:3 "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

Genesis 9:4 "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

Animal and plant life is said to be "given" to mankind - implying that mankind is God's appointed steward - - managers who will be held accountable. Jesus tells us in the New Testament that the Lord is concerned about even one sparrow who falls to the ground...

Further, you are not to brutalize animals, even though they are given for meat - v4. Proverbs 12:10 "A righteous man regards the life of his animal..."

v It teaches respect for all living human beings (v5-7)

Genesis 9:5 "Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

Genesis 9:7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it."

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<sup>1</sup>The Genesis Record

We do not implement the death penalty as a deterrent, nor because it is more economical than housing prisoners. We do so because it is the command of God. As we do so, we are taught that life is precious - made in the image of God. Capital punishment, of men and even animals who violate this sanctity of life, reminds us that there is a Creator holding us accountable for our stewardship.

Martin Luther wrote, "God establishes government and gives it the power of the *sword* to hold wantonness in check, lest violence and other sins proceed without limit."<sup>2</sup> As Genesis unfolds, the subsequent generations grow increasingly wanton! Would God again destroy mankind by water? No; in Genesis 8:21, God had said, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done." Along with the sword, God gives a sign to mankind that he will not send another global flood.

What is the sign? It is the "rainbow in the clouds," v13, 14, & 16.

Genesis 9:8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

Genesis 9:9 "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

Genesis 9:10 "and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

Genesis 9:11 "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

Genesis 9:12 And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

,Genesis 9:13 "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

,Genesis 9:14 "It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

Genesis 9:15 "and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

,Genesis 9:16 "The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

Genesis 9:17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

There had probably never been clouds before, probably never a rainbow. The flood was partly accomplished by the collapse of a vast vapor or ice canopy surrounding the earth. With the canopy gone, a new water cycle and new atmospheric conditions came into being. There would now be seasons - and storms. It would rain for the first time! As man continued to be wanton and violent and to sin, the formation of water in clouds would seem ominous. The rainbow in the clouds reveals God's longsuffering mercy in His dealing with men.

Our own generation is exceptional in wantonness, violence, and sins.

#2 Personal Government Requires

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<sup>2</sup>quoted by Boice, Genesis (Volume One).

## The Power Of God's Spirit (v18-23)

The next several verses are troubling for a number of reasons. They are about self-control, or the lack of it! They are about how you govern your own sinful passions.

It strikes you as odd that Noah is drunk one minute, then is prophesying the next. That is precisely the key, however. In one case he is drunk with wine; in the next, he is filled with the Spirit of God. It sounds a lot like Ephesians 5:18 -

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit..."

It is only by the **power** of God the Holy Spirit that you are truly able to **govern** yourself.

Genesis 9:18 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.

Genesis 9:19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

Genesis 9:20 And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

Genesis 9:21 Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

Genesis 9:22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

Genesis 9:23 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.

Noah had been sober among drunks; now he gets drunk among those who are sober! While there is no prohibition against drinking alcohol, drunkenness is always a sin - even in private. Noah lay naked - "uncovered" - in a drunken stupor in his tent.

Ham enters the tent, sees his father naked, then spreads the news of Noah's sin to Shem and Japheth. Because of the severe curse spoken on Ham's son, Canaan, a number of unbiblical theories have arisen as to exactly what happened in the tent:

v According to one theory, Ham had homosexual relations with Noah...

v According to another theory, Ham took the opportunity to have sex with his mother, and Canaan was the offspring of that incest...

v According to a third theory, Ham castrated Noah in order to take his place as patriarch...

The text won't support these wild theories! Noah literally "uncovered *himself*." The remedy for this was to be re-covered with a garment. Whatever he did, it must be something you can do to yourself that can be undone by being re-covered with a garment. It appears that the simple explanation in the text is the best - Noah was drunk and naked, Ham saw it and spread the news.

Here are two observations:

v Isn't it interesting that, in our minds, just being drunk and naked isn't serious enough, so much so that we invent other perverted ideas about what happened?

v Sin in a believers life is bad - but spreading that sin is worse! Christians often act towards each other exactly the way Ham did towards Noah. We ought to learn from Shem and Japheth - share in the shame and care enough to 'cover' sin in a biblically appropriate way.

The theories are trying to deal with the severity of God's curse, which is not upon Ham, but upon his son, Canaan. It seems unfair to us that the son would be held responsible for the actions of the father.

That would, in fact, be unfair. That's not what's going on here, though. *God's* character is not the issue. It is *Ham's* carnal character that is the issue. That carnality is evidently being passed down by Ham to his son, Canaan, by his life's example. Bible history will show that the majority of Canaanites do follow after carnality. God doesn't predestine the innocent descendants to evil and servitude; He merely prophesies the result of Ham's example on his unrepentant offspring.

God's character is not the issue; *your* character is! If you have children, they can be deeply influenced by your example - for good *or* for evil. It is not the character of our Father in heaven you need fear, but the character of earthly fathers and mothers.

Noah recovers from his sin and prophesies. He is restored by the action of his two sons. The result is that he is what we would call "filled with the Spirit," or, more accurately, "under the control of the Spirit." Personal government requires yielding to the power of God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible uses wine as an example. Don't be under the physical influence of something like wine; be controlled instead by God's indwelling Spirit.

### #3 Prophetic Government Reveals The Power Of God's Sovereignty (v24-29)

Genesis 9:24 So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.

Genesis 9:25 Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren."

Genesis 9:26 And he said: "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant.

Genesis 9:27 May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."

Genesis 9:28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

Genesis 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

This prophecy is an outline of human history, describing the relationships between the races and the nations descended from these three sons of Noah. With hindsight, you can see its accuracy:

v The blessing on "the Lord, the God of Shem" works out historically as you see that it is through Shem's descendants, and through the line of Eber and the family of Abraham in particular, that all mankind would be blessed with the coming of Jesus, "the Lord God of Shem."

v As for the descendants of Japheth, these are Gentile peoples who were "enlarged" and who would "dwell in the tents of Shem." Enlargement speaks of political power and empire; dwelling in tents with Shem speaks of partaking along with Shem's descendants in their communion with God. In this prophecy you recognize the political power of the Gentiles, who descend from Japheth. It was through the particular successes of the Gentile empires of Greece and Rome that Japheth's descendants can be said to "dwell in the tents of Shem." The Greek language, established throughout the Roman Empire, allowed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to spread beyond Jerusalem to the entire Gentile world!

v As for the Canaanites...When Israel, the descendants of Shem through Eber and Abraham, were to enter and possess the land, who stood in their way? The Canaanites. When Joshua entered the land, many Canaanite peoples became the servants of the Jews just as Noah prophesied. The Canaanites also were subdued by the descendants of Japheth, as in Noah's prophecy. When Rome was being established as a world empire, her early rival was Carthage, a colony of Tyre, sprung from Sidon - one of the sons of Canaan!<sup>3</sup>

We can call this **prophetic government**. The Bible contains prophecy - which is history written in advance. As you study it you cannot help but see that the succession of human governments has all been under the sovereign design of God. What God has had his prophets prophesy has come to pass exactly as He said it would.

### Conclusion

**Prophetic government** will unfold according to God's sovereignty. You have certain roles and responsibilities toward **public government**. What you and I ought to concentrate on more than these is **personal government**. It is only when God's people are yielded to His Spirit that they can have an effect on both prophetic government and on public government:

vConcerning prophetic government: 2Peter 3:11-12 "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God..."

v Concerning public government: 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from

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<sup>3</sup>see Studies In Genesis, Rbt. Candlish, p. 164-166.

their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

The Christian who probably had the greatest effect on public government, and who revealed the most about prophetic government, was Daniel. The key to his effectiveness was that he concentrated on personal government - Daniel 1:8 "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank..."