**July 8, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 9 of the Book of Genesis**

**God’s Covenant with Noah**

Chapter 9 marks the start of the renewal of life on earth as Noah, his family and the animals have left the ark a year after they went on board.  In the previous chapter God had commanded that the animals leave the ark so they could be fruitful and multiply and he now says the same to Noah and his family.  The KJV says that Noah and his family are to **replenish** the earth, that is to repopulate the earth after the previous human life had been eliminated except for the 8 survivors.  Vernon McGee notes that the same word was used in chapter 1 when God told Adam to replenish the earth (1:28).  McGee believes that is an indication that there were living creatures on earth prior to Adam.  There is a counter argument that the original Hebrew word only meant fill rather than re-fill.  All humans can trace their ancestry back to the 8 people who were the only survivors of the flood.  In chapter one, God gave Adam dominion over all animals and now he instills fear of man in the animals.  It appears that previously humans had only eaten vegetation but now God gives them the right to use animals for food.

There is no mention of clean vs. unclean animals and their suitability for food (see Lev. Chapter 11 for God’s instructions regarding eating animals).   The fear of man that God gave animals may be a defense mechanism to help them avoid humans who would be hunting them.  It is remarkable that even animals substantially larger than humans seem to have this innate fear of man and will run away.  A horse may outweigh its trainer 10 to 1 yet willingly submits to the trainer’s commands.  Matthew Henry wrote that it is well that animals do not unite and rise up in rebellion to man.  Verses 4 & 5 indicate the importance of blood in animals including man. God prohibits eating an animal that still is alive, however when God gave Moses the law, He identified numerous holy purposes for the blood of animals that were sacrificed.  For the Christian, the blood of Jesus cleanses our sins.  In verses 5 & 6 God shows how much He values human life declaring a death sentence on those who murder.  Matthew Henry wrote that the phrase “for your life blood, I will surely demand an accounting” is God’s prohibition of suicide.

In chapter 8 God told Noah He would never again destroy all living creatures and in chapter 9 He formally establishes the covenant that He will never again destroy all life by a flood (He will destroy it by fire, see 2nd Peter 3:7).  The symbol of this covenant is the rainbow which also surrounds God’ throne in heaven (see Rev. 4:3).

Noah’s sons are listed as Shem, Ham and Japheth which is the same order they are listed in numerous places in the Bible.  One may think that Shem was the oldest since he is always listed first but that it is not the case.  Japheth was the oldest (10:21) and Ham the youngest (9:24).  Shem is always listed first because it is through his line that Jesus descended.  What we read next is the first written account of sins occurring after the flood beginning with Noah’s sin of getting drunk.  Some attempt to excuse this behavior by speculating that Noah had never drunk fermented grape juice before and had no idea about its potential effects.  There are numerous references in the Bible to drunkenness as a sin (Eph. 5:18, Rom. 13:13, Gal. 5:21, 1st Cor. 6:10 are examples).  Verse 9 of chapter 6 says that Noah was a just man and perfect **in his generations**.  I think perfection among men is a relative term while God’s perfection is absolute.  Although Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah was righteous because of his faith, he was not sinless.  What follows Noah’s sin has been the subject of much debate.  His youngest son Ham sees Noah drunk and naked and told his brothers about it and they cover his nakedness.  Verse 24 says that when Noah awakened, he knew what Ham had done to him.  The opinions of Ham’s sin range from mocking his father to sexually molesting him.  Whatever Ham did, Noah’s prophecy is that Ham’s son Canaan would be a servant to Shem.  Most fathers would rather suffer punishment themselves than see it inflicted upon a son. This prophecy was realized generations later when the Israelites who descended from Shem took over the lands of the Canaanites.  The reference to Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem is thought to indicate that Gentiles who would be descendants of Japheth would unite with converted Jews in the early Christian church.