

Why was Canaan Cursed for what Ham Did?

This was a question posed by our minister to the congregation of which I was a relatively new member. He did not give us the answer; but wanted us to put in writing the solution to the problem. By doing this, he accomplished two things. First, and most important, was that when reading biblical accounts that seem unclear, we need to dig out the truth of the matter. Of course in order to do this, it required more in depth study on our part; which was what he was trying to get us to do. Secondly, he wanted us to see that God did not condemn the innocent.

It appeared that the problem was that Ham saw his father naked as a result of becoming intoxicated by imbibing in too much wine; wine he made from his own vineyard. Ham then tells his two brothers what he saw. They then cover Noah's naked body by walking backward to cover their father. Because of this great respectful act, we now think that that Ham was guilty. This causes the reader to assume his guilt was in seeing his father naked.

Gen 9:22, *"And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside."* In this verse, Canaan is mentioned which is the first clue in understanding what had taken place. The second, and most revealing clue, is found in the meaning of the word "nakedness." This word is Strong's #6172 and has the following meaning: "It is synonymous with illicit sexual activity as described in the chapters of Leviticus 18 and 20."

Although much of our society accepts deviant sexual acts such as homosexuality and sodomy as normal, they are grievous sins in the eyes of God.

In Gen 9:21, *"Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent."* The original KJV "was" is used in place of became. The key word is "uncovered," which is #1540 in Strong's, and has a very ominous meaning. The following is the definition for this word found in The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament on page 161. "But it is used most frequently in this stem for designating proscribed (prohibited) sexual activity. It occurs twenty-four times in Lev 18 and 20 in the expression "to uncover the shame" which denotes sexual intercourse in proscribed (prohibited) situations, usually incest."

Looking at Leviticus 18:6 gives us understanding: *"None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the Lord."* This scripture shows the word "uncover" requires someone to do the uncovering, and is not the action of the one who is uncovered.

Gen 9:24, *“So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.”* When the term “younger son” is understood the mystery becomes clear. The word “younger” is #6996, and means young in age or insignificant in stature. One might be inclined to think that Ham was the youngest; but in all references of the three sons of Noah, Ham is always referred to as the middle son. Then who was this “younger son?” It was Canaan, who was the younger son of Ham, and Noah’s young grandson, which is confirmed in the genealogy found in I Chronicles 1:8. *“The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.”* Note in this genealogy Canaan is named last, meaning he was the youngest son of Ham.

The story is as follows: Ham finds his youngest son, Canaan in an illicit sexual act with his grandfather, who is so drunk that he could not defend himself; but not so drunk that he did not know who was guilty of this act. In Genesis 9:25-27 we read: *“Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’ And he said: ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Jephtha, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant.’”* Noah cursed the guilty one: Canaan.

Don Roth

01-12-16