

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

God blesses Noah and his sons, Genesis 9:1. The brute creation to be subject to them through fear, Genesis 9:2. The first grant of animal food, Genesis 9:3. Eating of blood forbidden, Genesis 9:4. Cruelty to animals forbidden, Genesis 9:5. A man-slayer to forfeit his life, Genesis 9:6. The covenant of God established between him and Noah and the whole brute creation, Genesis 9:8-11. The rainbow given as the sign and pledge of this covenant, Genesis 9:12-17. The three sons of Noah people the whole earth, Genesis 9:18, Genesis 9:19. Noah plants a vineyard, drinks of the wine, is intoxicated, and lies exposed in his tent, Genesis 9:20, Genesis 9:21. The reprehensible conduct of Ham, Genesis 9:22. The laudable carriage of Shem and Japheth, Genesis 9:23. Noah prophetically declares the servitude of the posterity of Ham, Genesis 9:24, Genesis 9:25; and the dignity and increase of Shem and Japheth, Genesis 9:26, Genesis 9:27. The age and death of Noah, Genesis 9:28, Genesis 9:29.

## Verse 1

God blessed Noah - Even the increase of families, which appears to depend on merely natural means, and sometimes fortuitous circumstances, is all of God. It is by his power and wisdom that the human being is formed, and it is by his providence alone that man is supported and preserved.

## Verse 2

The fear of you and the dread, etc. - Prior to the fall, man ruled the inferior animals by love and kindness, for then gentleness and docility were their principal characteristics. After the fall, untractableness, with savage ferocity, prevailed among almost all orders of the brute creation; enmity to man seems particularly to prevail; and had not God in his mercy impressed their minds with the fear and terror of man, so that some submit to his will while others flee from his residence, the human race would long ere this have been totally destroyed by the beasts of the field. Did the horse know his own strength, and the weakness of the miserable wretch who unmercifully rides, drives, whips, goads, and oppresses him, would he not with one stroke of his hoof destroy his tyrant possessor? But while God hides these things from him he impresses his mind with the fear of his owner, so that either by cheerful or sullen submission he is trained up for, and employed in, the most useful and important purposes; and even willingly submits, when tortured for the sport and amusement of his more brutish oppressor. Tigers, wolves, lions, and hyenas, the determinate foes of man, incapable of being tamed or domesticated, flee, through the principle of terror, from the dwelling of man, and thus he is providentially safe. Hence, by fear and by dread man rules every beast of the earth, every fowl of the air, and every fish of the sea. How wise and gracious is this order of the Divine providence! and with what thankfulness should it be considered by every human being!

## Verse 3

Every moving thing - shall be meat - There is no positive evidence that animal food was ever used before the flood. Noah had the first grant of this kind, and it has been continued to all his posterity ever since. It is not likely that this grant would have been now made if some extraordinary alteration had not taken place in the vegetable world, so as to render its productions less nutritive than they were before; and probably such a change in the constitution of man as to render a grosser and higher diet necessary. We may therefore safely infer that the earth was less productive after the flood than it was before, and that the human constitution was greatly impaired by the alterations which had taken place through the whole economy of nature. Morbid debility, induced by an often unfriendly state of the atmosphere, with sore and long-continued labor, would necessarily require a higher nutriment than vegetables could supply. That this was the case appears sufficiently clear from the grant of animal food, which, had it not been indispensably necessary, had not been made. That the constitution of man was then much altered appears in the greatly contracted lives of the postdiluvians; yet from the deluge to the day of Abraham the lives of several of the patriarchs amounted to some hundreds of years; but this was the effect of a peculiar providence, that the new world might be the more speedily repopled.

## Verse 4

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood - Though animal food was granted, yet the blood was most solemnly forbidden, because it was the life of the beast, and this life was to be offered to God as an atonement for sin. Hence the blood was ever held sacred, because it was the grand instrument of expiation, and because it was typical of that blood by which we enter into the holiest. 1. Before the deluge it was not eaten, because animal food was not in use. 2. After the deluge it was prohibited, as we find above; and, being one of the seven Noahic precepts, it was not eaten previously to the publication of the Mosaic law. 3. At the giving of the law, and at several times during the ministry of Moses, the prohibition was most solemnly, and with awful penalties renewed. Hence we may rest assured that no blood was eaten previously to the Christian era, nor indeed ever

since by the Jewish people. 4. That the prohibition has been renewed under the Christian dispensation, can admit of little doubt by any man who dispassionately reads Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29; Acts 21:25, where even the Gentile converts are charged to abstain from it on the authority, not only of the apostles, but of the Holy Ghost, who gave them there and then especial direction concerning this point; see Acts 15:28; not for fear of stumbling the converted Jews, the gloss of theologians, but because it was one of those necessary points, from the burden (the yoke) of obedience to which they could not be excused. 5. This command is still scrupulously obeyed by the oriental Christians, and by the whole Greek Church; and why? because the reasons still subsist. No blood was eaten under the law, because it pointed out the blood that was to be shed for the sin of the world; and under the Gospel it should not be eaten, because it should ever be considered as representing the blood which has been shed for the remission of sins. If the eaters of blood in general knew that it affords a very crude, almost indigestible, and unwholesome ailment, they certainly would not on these physical reasons, leaving moral considerations out of the question, be so much attached to the consumption of that from which they could expect no wholesome nutriment, and which, to render it even pleasing to the palate, requires all the skill of the cook. See Leviticus 17:10.

#### Verse 5

Surely your blood - will I require; at the hand of every beast - This is very obscure, but if taken literally it seems to be an awful warning against cruelty to the brute creation; and from it we may conclude that horse-racers, hare-hunters, bull-baiters, and cock-fighters shall be obliged to give an account to God for every creature they have wantonly destroyed. Instead of  $x-x^{TM}x$  (chayah),  $\hat{a}\hat{e}\hat{o}\hat{b}\hat{e}\hat{a}\hat{s}\hat{t}$  the Samaritan reads (Yod Kaph) (chai),  $\hat{a}\hat{e}\hat{o}\hat{l}\hat{i}\hat{v}\hat{i}\hat{n}\hat{g}$  any  $\hat{a}\hat{e}\hat{o}\hat{l}\hat{i}\hat{v}\hat{i}\hat{n}\hat{g}$  creature or person;  $\hat{a}\hat{e}$  this makes a very good sense, and equally forbids cruelty either to men or brutes.

#### Verse 6

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood - Hence it appears that whoever kills a man, unless unwittingly, as the Scripture expresses it, shall forfeit his own life.

A man is accused of the crime of murder; of this crime he is guilty or he is not: if he be guilty of murder he should die; if not, let him be punished according to the demerit of his crime; but for no offense but murder should he lose his life. Taking away the life of another is the highest offense that can be committed against the individual, and against society; and the highest punishment that a man can suffer for such a crime is the loss of his own life. As punishment should be ever proportioned to crimes, so the highest punishment due to the highest crime should not be inflicted for a minor offense. The law of God and the eternal dictates of reason say, that if a man kill another, the loss of his own life is at once the highest penalty he can pay, and an equivalent for his offense as far as civil society is concerned. If the death of the murderer be the highest penalty he can pay for the murder he has committed, then the infliction of this punishment for any minor offense is injustice and cruelty; and serves only to confound the claims of justice, the different degrees of moral turpitude and vice, and to render the profligate desperate: hence the adage so frequent among almost every order of delinquents,  $\hat{a}\hat{e}\hat{o}\hat{l}\hat{i}\hat{t}$  is as good to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb;  $\hat{a}\hat{e}$  which at once marks their desperation, and the injustice of those penal laws which inflict the highest punishment for almost every species of crime. When shall a wise and judicious legislature see the absurdity and injustice of inflicting the punishment of death for stealing a sheep or a horse, forging a twenty shillings note, and Murdering A Man; when the latter, in its moral turpitude and ruinous consequences, infinitely exceeds the others? (\* On this head the doctor's pious wish has been realized since this paragraph was written. - Publishers)

#### Verse 13

I do set my bow in the cloud - On the origin and nature of the rainbow there had been a great variety of conjectures, till Anthony de Dominis, bishop of Spalatro, in a treatise of his published by Bartholus in 1611, partly suggested the true cause of this phenomenon, which was afterwards fully explained and demonstrated by Sir Isaac Newton. To enter into this subject here in detail would be improper; and therefore the less informed reader must have recourse to treatises on Optics for its full explanation. To readers in general it may be sufficient to say that the rainbow is a mere natural effect of a natural cause:

- 1.It is never seen but in showery weather.
- 2.Nor then unless the sun shines.
- 3.It never appears in any part of the heavens but in that opposite to the sun.
- 4.It never appears greater than a semicircle, but often much less.
- 5.It is always double, there being what is called the superior and inferior, or primary and secondary rainbow.
- 6.These bows exhibit the seven prismatic colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
- 7.



beginning to be a husbandman we are to understand his recommencing his agricultural operations, which undoubtedly he had carried on for six hundred years before, but this had been interrupted by the flood. And the transaction here mentioned might have occurred many years posterior to the deluge, even after Canaan was born and grown up, for the date of it is not fixed in the text.

The word husband first occurs here, and scarcely appears proper, because it is always applied to man in his married state, as wife is to the woman. The etymology of the term will at once show its propriety when applied to the head of a family. Husband, is Anglo-Saxon, and simply signifies the bond of the house or family; as by him the family is formed, united, and bound together, which, on his death, is disunited and scattered.

It is on this etymology of the word that we can account for the farmers and petty landholders being called so early as the twelfth century, husbandi, as appears in a statute of David II., king of Scotland: we may therefore safely derive the word from (hus), a house, and (bond) from (binben), to bind or tie; and this etymology appears plainer in the orthography which prevailed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in which I have often found the word written house-bond; so it is in a MS. Bible before me, written in the fourteenth century. Junius disputes this etymology, but I think on no just ground.

#### Verse 21

He drank of the wine, etc. - It is very probable that this was the first time the wine was cultivated; and it is as probable that the strength or intoxicating power of the expressed juice was never before known. Noah, therefore, might have drunk it at this time without the least blame, as he knew not till this trial the effects it would produce. I once knew a case which I believe to be perfectly parallel. A person who had scarcely ever heard of cider, and whose beverage through his whole life had been only milk or water, coming wet and very much fatigued to a farmer's house in Somersetshire, begged for a little water or milk. The good woman of the house, seeing him very much exhausted, kindly said, "I will give you a little cider, which will do you more good." The honest man, understanding no more of cider than merely that it was the simple juice of apples, after some hesitation drank about a half pint of it; the consequence was, that in less than half an hour he was perfectly intoxicated, and could neither speak plain nor walk! This case I myself witnessed. A stranger to the circumstances, seeing this person, would pronounce him drunk; and perhaps at a third hand he might be represented as a drunkard, and thus his character be blasted; while of the crime of drunkenness he was as innocent as an infant.

This I presume to have been precisely the case with Noah; and no person without an absolute breach of every rule of charity and candour, can attach any blame to the character of Noah on this ground, unless from a subsequent account they were well assured that, knowing the power and effects of the liquor, he had repeated the act. Some expositors seem to be glad to fix on a fact like this, which by their distortion becomes a crime; and then, in a strain of sympathetic tenderness, affect to deplore "the failings and imperfections of the best of men;" when, from the interpretation that should be given of the place, neither failing nor imperfection can possibly appear.

#### Verses 22-24

And Ham, the father of Canaan, etc. - There is no occasion to enter into any detail here; the sacred text is circumstantial enough. Ham, and very probably his son Canaan, had treated their father on this occasion with contempt or reprehensible levity. Had Noah not been innocent, as my exposition supposes him, God would not have endued him with the spirit of prophecy on this occasion, and testified such marked disapprobation of their conduct. The conduct of Shem and Japheth was such as became pious and affectionate children, who appear to have been in the habit of treating their father with decency, reverence, and obedient respect. On the one the spirit of prophecy (not the incensed father) pronounces a curse: on the others the same spirit (not parental tenderness) pronounces a blessing. These things had been just as they afterwards occurred had Noah never spoken. God had wise and powerful reasons to induce him to sentence the one to perpetual servitude, and to allot to the others prosperity and dominion. Besides, the curse pronounced on Canaan neither fell immediately upon himself nor on his worthless father, but upon the Canaanites; and from the history we have of this people, in Leviticus 18:6, Leviticus 18:7, Leviticus 18:24, Leviticus 18:29, Leviticus 18:30, Leviticus 20:9, Leviticus 20:22-24, Leviticus 20:26; and Deuteronomy 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:31, we may ask, Could the curse of God fall more deservedly on any people than on these? Their profligacy was great, but it was not the effect of the curse; but, being foreseen by the Lord, the curse was the effect of their conduct. But even this curse does not exclude them from the possibility of obtaining salvation; it extends not to the soul and to eternity, but merely to their bodies and to time; though, if they continued to abuse their liberty, resist the Holy Ghost, and refuse to be saved on God's terms, then the wrath of Divine justice must come upon them to the uttermost. How many, even of these, repented, we cannot tell.

#### Verse 25

Cursed be Canaan - See on the preceding verses. In the 25th, 26th, and 27th verses, instead of Canaan simply, the Arabic version has Ham the father of Canaan; but this is acknowledged by none of the other versions, and



seems to be merely a gloss.

#### Verse 29

The days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years - The oldest patriarch on record, except Methuselah and Jared. This, according to the common reckoning, was A. M. 2006, but according to Dr. Hales, 3505.

“Ham,” says Dr. Hales, “signifies burnt or black, and this name was peculiarly significant of the regions allotted to his family. To the Cushites, or children of his eldest son Cush, were allotted the hot southern regions of Asia, along the coasts of the Persian Gulf, Susiana or Chusistan, Arabia, etc.; to the sons of Canaan, Palestine and Syria; to the sons of Misraim, Egypt and Libya, in Africa.

The Hamites in general, like the Canaanites of old, were a seafaring race, and sooner arrived at civilization and the luxuries of life than their simpler pastoral and agricultural brethren of the other two families. The first great empires of Assyria and Egypt were founded by them, and the republics of Sidon, Tyre, and Carthage were early distinguished for their commerce but they sooner also fell to decay; and Egypt, which was one of the first, became the last and basest of the kingdoms, Ezekiel 29:15, and has been successively in subjection to the Shemites and Japhethites, as have also the settlements of the other branches of the Hamites.

“Shem signifies name or renown; and his indeed was great in a temporal and spiritual sense. The finest regions of Upper and Middle Asia allotted to his family, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Media, Persia, etc., to the Indus and Ganges, and perhaps to China eastward. “The chief renown of Shem was of a spiritual nature: he was destined to be the lineal ancestor of the blessed seed of the woman; and to this glorious privilege Noah, to whom it was probably revealed, might have alluded in that devout ejaculation, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! The pastoral life of the Shemites is strongly marked in the prophecy by the tents of Shem; and such it remains to the present day, throughout their midland settlements in Asia.

“Japheth signifies enlargement; and how wonderfully did Providence enlarge the boundaries of Japheth! His posterity diverged eastward and westward throughout the whole extent of Asia, north of the great range of Taurus, as far as the Eastern Ocean, whence they probably crossed over to America by Behring’s Straits from Kamtschatka, and in the opposite direction throughout Europe to the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean; from whence also they might have crossed over to America by Newfoundland, where traces of early settlements remain in parts now desert. Thus did they gradually enlarge themselves till they literally encompassed the earth, within the precincts of the northern temperate zone, to which their roving hunter’s life contributed not a little. Their progress northwards was checked by the much greater extent of the Black Sea in ancient times, and the increasing rigour of the climates: but their hardy race, and enterprising, warlike genius, made them frequently encroach southwards on the settlements of Shem, whose pastoral and agricultural occupations rendered them more inactive, peaceable and unwarlike; and so they dwelt in the tents of Shem when the Scythians invaded Media, and subdued western Asia southwards as far as Egypt, in the days of Cyaxares; when the Greeks, and afterwards the Romans, overran and subdued the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians in the east, and the Syrians and Jews in the south; as foretold by the Syrian prophet Balaam, Numbers 24:24: -

“Ships shall come from Chittim, And shall afflict the Assyrians, and afflict the Hebrews; But he (the invader) shall perish himself at last.”

“And by Moses: And the Lord shall bring thee (the Jews) into Egypt (or bondage) again with ships, etc., Deuteronomy 28:68. And by Daniel: For the ships of Chittim shall come against him, viz., Antiochus, king of Syria, Daniel 11:30. In these passages Chittim denotes the southern coasts of Europe, bounding the Mediterranean, called the isles of the Gentiles or Nations; see Genesis 10:5. And the isles of Chittim are mentioned Jeremiah 2:10. And in after times the Tartars in the east have repeatedly invaded and subdued the Hindoos and the Chinese; while the warlike and enterprising genius of the greatest of the isles of the Gentiles, Great Britain and Ireland, have spread their colonies, their arms, their language, their arts, and in some measure their religion, from the rising to the setting sun.” See Dr. Hales’s Analysis of Chronology, vol. 1., p. 352, etc. Though what is left undone should not cause us to lose sight of what is done, yet we have reason to lament that the inhabitants of the British isles, who of all nations under heaven have the purest light of Divine revelation, and the best means of diffusing it, have been much more intent on spreading their conquests and extending their commerce, than in propagating the Gospel of the Son of God. But the nation, by getting the Bible translated into every living language, and sending it to all parts of the habitable globe, and, by its various missionary societies, sending men of God to explain and enforce the doctrines and precepts of this sacred book, is rapidly redeeming its character, and becoming great in goodness and benevolence over the whole earth!