

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 9:1-28

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

Genesis 9:1-2

(NAC) – Just as Adam's sin in the garden did not negate God's command to be fruitful and multiply upon the earth, so too even after the rampant evil found during Noah's day was erased, the recently disembarked family was commanded to go out into the world and be fruitful and multiply. God's plan had not changed, even after the deluge.

(NAC) – While the command given by God remains constant, sin has changed man's relationship to the world. "It is striking that the charge to "subdue" and "rule" is absent. This admits that the new circumstances of the sin-burdened world have altered this aspect of the Adamic blessing, which now will be difficult to accomplish in the hostile environs of the new world."

(KUR) – "Genesis 9:1-7 begins and ends with the command to be fruitful and to multiply...a restatement of God's creation promise for the human family...but now its provisions are modified in light of encroaching societal wickedness...this reminds the reader that "re-creation" has not yet overcome sin *in toto*."

(NAC) – In the Garden of Eden, Adam enjoys harmony in his relationship to the beasts of the earth, but in the post-diluvian world the beasts would fear mankind. Mathews asserts, "to insure that animal life will not be a threat to the human family, the Lord endows the animal population with a "fear and dread" of human beings."

(KUR) – In looking at the wandering Israelites, to whom the Genesis was written, and their relation to the wild beasts (i.e. foreign nations) in the Promised Land, Kuruvilla quotes an article by Steven D. Mason, "The point offered here is twofold. First, the human to animal relationship in Genesis 9 characterizes and prefigures Israel's dominion over other nations. Thus the animals in Genesis 9 serve double-duty. They represent the real relationship

between human beings and animals within the world, and they represent in anticipatory fashion the relationship between Israel and its enemies in the promised land. Second, the images and ideas of fruitfulness and multiplication, and subduing threats to this mandate as expressed in Gen 9:1-7, Leviticus 26, and other Old Testament texts..., demonstrate these elements of Genesis 9:1-7 are intrinsically covenant ideas.”

(BST) – “For now God is giving his creation mandate into the hands of potential evildoers...No longer is the context *very good*; rather, the world is filled with *fear* and *dread*.”

Genesis 9:3-7

(NAC) – In the post-flood world, God has given man one new decree and two stated prohibitions. Whereas before the flood, man ate only from what could be produced from the ground, now God has given man the freedom to eat the meat from the living creatures of the earth, with the stated prohibition that man should abstain from consuming the blood of those creatures. “This restriction was not a matter of decorum but a recognition that the blood was representative of the life force...Animal life, though given to humanity for sustenance, remained valuable in the eyes of God as a living creature and therefore merited proper care, not wanton abuse. This privilege of killing animals for food assumed the responsibility of caring for animal life as it was first formulated in Eden. Disregard for the gift of life was an affront to the Giver of that life, for life was deemed “good” as a creation edict.”

(BKW) – “Blood is equated with life in the Old Testament...By forbidding the eating of blood, this regulation instills a respect for the sacredness of life and protects against wanton abuse.”

(PTW) – “The reason for this is respect for life and beyond that the respect for the giver of life. Life is in the blood, and God is the giver of life. Disregard for the gift of life is an affront to the giver of life.”

(NAC) – Moving from taking the life of an animal, the second prohibition God gives Noah concerns the taking of life from humans. “Human life must be treated with special caution, however, because it is of singular value as life created in the “image of God”...The basis of the prohibition against taking human life is rooted in the transcendent value of human life conferred at creation...The general rule is that human life when violated, either by animal or fellow human, required the life of the offender.”

(NAC) – The NIV and ESV translate the Hebrew word “אָחִי” as “fellow man” whereas the Hebrew idiom refers to a “brother.” In such, Moses uses this word as a double entendre. “Here it echoes the first human murder, the fratricide of Cain and Able, “his brother.” “Am I my brother’s keeper?” argues Cain. Our passage explicitly answers yes.” At the same time, the term “brother” links all mankind together as there is only one true Father of creation.

(PTW) – “There is a double entendre here, because “from his brother” echoes the first human murder, when Cain murdered his brother. But also by virtue of our shared humanity in the image of God, all murder is fratricide...to take human life is to usurp God’s sovereignty over life and death—and thus merits death itself...to argue against the death penalty on humane grounds is to argue against God’s Word. It exists precisely because of God’s humane concerns. To ignore it is to despise life.”

(CAL) – “No one can harm his brother without in a sense wounding God himself.”

(NAC) – “The severity of the punishment is required because of the heinous nature of the crime. This long-standing principle of jurisprudence, known as *lex talionis* (i.e., “an eye for an eye”), insures that the punishment is commensurate with the weight of the crime. “Shedding blood” is used of premeditated murder and also killing in battle. Here it refers to the former and shows that the Ten Words of the Mosaic covenant were not innovative but reflective of existing moral belief.”

(KUR) – Verse 6 is structured as a chiasm:

A – Whoever sheds
B – the blood
C – of man,
C’ – by man
B’ – his blood
A’ – shall be shed.

(BKW) – “The chiastic style matches the concept of poetic justice: life for life...Human beings are God’s agents for exacting compensation by capital punishment. They stand in God’s stead as rulers. The legislation lays the foundation for government by the state.”

(NAC) – “Justification for penal execution is the value of the victim, the “image of God.” God alone may make or dispose of a person as he sees fit. This we saw in the case of Cain, whose life is spared by the “mark” because the Lord reserves for himself the authority to avenge the violation...Capital punishment is not interpreted as a threat to the value of human life but rather is society’s expression of God’s wrath upon anyone who would profane the sanctity of human life. New Testament writings interpreted capital punishment as a necessary function of society, where the state is defined as the divinely designated “servant” that administers retribution. Genesis removed personal vengeance and restricted blood feuding that led to reckless killing.”

(KUR) – For its part, mankind, in the image of God, has been deputized...he had been empowered by God to act on his behalf to keep societal sin under check. Only then, with this ongoing sin under control, can mankind be fruitful and multiply and fulfill God’s design for it.”

(SOG) – “The rationale for this severe penalty is that humans are made in the image of God. Their life has dignity, and since they reflect the glory of God, an assault on a human is an assault on God himself.”

(BST) – The awful seriousness of taking any human life derives from two important facts. First, human life is in very special sense God’s property...Second, as we have seen, every living human being bears the image of God...Human authority is to take a share in the exercise of divine judgment. Here are the beginnings of a doctrine of social order, of the authorities, even of the State.”

(NAC) – “In contrast to the murderer who terminates life, Noah’s family is commissioned to propagate and celebrate life.”

Genesis 9:8-11

(NAC) – Hidden by our English translations are the verb tenses of the Hebrew word “establish”, used three times in this small section. These tenses “[show] the divine initiative and realization of the covenant: “I now establish” (imminent future, v. 9); “I establish” (present, v. 11); and “I have established” (present perfect, v. 17). God initiates, sustains, and completes the covenant.”

(BKW) – “God unilaterally takes full responsibility to preserve the earth and its complete ecology forever...a total of eight times in this scene affirms God’s passionate concern for and certain commitment to the preservation and care of all living species on the earth.”

(NAC) – “Both the covenant and its sign have their origins in the Lord: they are “my covenant” and “my bow.”” Such a covenant is made by God with all of creation, promising that the judgment of the flood would never again overcome creation.

(PTW) – “This covenant was/is universal, unilateral, and unconditional.”

Genesis 9:12-17

(NAC) – Within this section the inclusiveness of all creation is stressed as the recipients of this covenant. From verse 10-17, Moses uses the phrase “all life” and “every living creation” eight different times.

(NAC) – God’s unconditional unilateral covenant was given the sign of the rainbow in the sky. The rainbow was most likely, although not necessarily, not a new creation at this point, but “rather the rainbow was newly appropriated and accorded special significance by the Lord for future generations.”

(BKW) – Waltke believes that God gives new meaning to the existing rainbow to remind mankind of his covenant. “The Hebrew reads simply “bow,” a battle weapon and hunting instrument...Here the warrior’s bow is hung up, pointed away from the earth...“Stretched

between heaven and earth, it is a bond of peace between both, and, spanning the horizon, it points to the all-embracing universality of the Divine mercy.””

(SOG) – “We should derive meaning from the fact that the bow is pointed heavenward, that is toward God. In short, the sign is a self-maledictory oath. In essence, God is saying, “if I break this promise, may I die.”

(NAC) – The Hebrew word זָכַר (*za-car*, to remember) is often used for covenantal language meant to reinforce God’s commitment to his promises.

Genesis 9:18-19

(NAC) – These two verses subtly shift the narrative’s eye from Noah to the sons and their role in the future progression of God’s blessing for humanity. Verses 18-19 bring to an end the flood account and prepare the way for the Table of Nations that will dominate the remainder of the universal history...For later Israel the Table of Nations oriented the Hebrews to their neighbors geographically and, inferentially, forewarns them of those peoples whose moral history and inclinations are suspect, especially the people of Canaan, where they will reside.”

Genesis 9:20-28

(KUR) – Even after the wiping out of mankind from the face of the earth, leaving only righteous Noah left, Kuruvilla points out that the same old sinful human heart still remained.

(NAC) – In linking Noah as the “new” Adam, Mathews states, “Noah and Adam share in the same profession (2:15; 9:20); the language of “curse” (3:14, 17; 5:29; 9:25) and “blessing” (1:28; 5:2; 9:26) are heard again; both experience the shame of “nakedness” (3:7, 10-11; 9:22-23); and, like Adam, Noah’s transgression results in familial strife among his descendants, resulting in fratricide for Adam’s sons (4:8) and slavery for Noah’s youngest (9:25-26).

(NAC) – “Noah’s drunkenness was reason for shame by itself, but his nakedness required action on the part of his sons. Even as Adam disgraced himself through sin and thereby “knew” his nakedness, Noah degraded himself by drunken stupor and concomitant nakedness. “Lay uncovered” describes his state in the tent; he is visibly naked...Noah was so inebriated that he stripped himself and probably passed out in the tent unclothed. Noah’s reproach was not in the drinking of the wine per se but in his excess, which led to his immodesty.”

(PTW) – “[Noah] was so utterly inebriated that he stripped himself naked and passed out. Having uncovered himself, he therefore had covered himself with shame and disgrace...This helpless drunk, fallen unconscious in his tent, is as significant a warning to us as the flood. Noah could not make it on his own. He was terribly flawed. He needed help from beyond himself. He needed God’s grace.”

(BST) – “The Noah who walked with God, who did all that the Lord commanded him concerning the ark, who trusted the Lord in faithful obedience when all around was disorder, who offered the burnt-offering of consecration, and who received the Lord’s covenanted promise—this God-fearing man is now described as a drunk lying uncovered in his tent...We [are] reminded in Genesis 8:21 that even after the flood ‘the inclination of the human heart is evil.’”

(SOG) – In asking why this story is in the Bible, Tremper Longman suggests “the purpose of this story is largely to explain why Canaanites are a problem.”

(NAC) – In describing the sin of Ham, Mathews states, “Whereas Adam was “clothed” by God, Ham left his father bare. Unwilling to desert him, Shem and Japheth “covered the nakedness” of Noah and carefully avoided seeing his nakedness by covering themselves and by walking backward...If in fact some lecherous deed occurred inside the tent, it is inexplicable why the covering of their father is in juxtaposition to Ham’s act. On other occasions Genesis is straightforward in its description of sexual misconduct...Ham’s reproach was not in seeing his father unclothed, though this was a shameful thing, but in his outspoken delight at his father’s disgraceful condition. The penalty against Ham’s son may be though too severe for mere sibling gossip, but this is because we fail to understand the gravity of Ham’s offense. We have noted elsewhere that nakedness was shameful in Hebrew culture. In later Israel specific prohibitions guarded against the public exposure of the genitals and buttocks, and nakedness was commonly associated with public misconduct...Ham ridiculed the “old man’s” downfall. In the ancient world insulting one’s parents was a serious matter that warranted the extreme penalty of death...This patriarchal incident illustrated the abrogation of the Fifth Commandment, “Honor your father and mother.” To do so means divine retaliation, for the crime is not against parent alone but is viewed as contempt for God’s hierarchical order in creation. Shem and Japheth, unlike Ham, treated Noah with proper respect. They refused to take advantage of him despite his vulnerable condition.”

(SOG) – “[Ham] dishonors his father by seeing his father and not helping him...While Ham does not come through, the other two brothers Shem and Japheth do the right thing and tactfully cover their father’s naked body.”

(PTW) – “Ham took a sniggering delight in the spectacle of his aged father sprawled naked in his tent. He also took perverse pleasure in exposing his father’s folly to his brothers...In marked antithesis, Shem and Japheth acted to cover their father’s nakedness by covering him with “the garment” ...The son’s covering of Noah’s nakedness bears monumental spiritual implications, because their actions unwittingly imitated God. Remember that when Adam and Eve sinned, “The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” Noah’s sons now covered his sin and nakedness.”

(BST) – Ham is pictured as dishonouring his father, presumably by impurely looking at his father's nakedness, by doing what we know not what, and then by broadcasting the indecency around. In the ancient world, honouring one's parents is one of the highest virtues, and Ham, it appears both from his brothers' response and from Noah's own reaction, had violated another aspect of the divine order."

(KUR) – Kuruvilla makes the case that the Hebrew word for "nakedness" (different from Gen 2:25 & 3:7) has a sexual and erotic connotation. He also suggests that "uncovering" "often signifies a sexual act in the Pentateuch (Lev. 18:6-19 [x17]; 20:11-21 [x7]; Deut. 23:1; 27:20) ...Of interest is that Lev. 18:1-5 commences the section by warning Israelites about imitating the debauched practices of Canaanites—the descendants of Ham—and Egyptians. Of the multiple sexual violations listed in Lev 18, the first is incest committed with one's mother." Kuruvilla then posits that it is possible that Ham's sin was incest committed with his mother which produced the offspring Canaan. This may be why the beginning of this story of Ham's sin begins with an acknowledgement that Canaan was Ham's son which followed with the story of how Canaan was conceived...According to Kuruvilla, it is also interesting that the story that immediately precedes the flood narrative is the story of the illicit sexual union of angels with women. "Thus both the epilogue and prologue to the deluge may be related in content. Sin is always with mankind"...If this is the case then the question needs to be answered why Shem and Japheth walked backward to cover the literal nakedness of their father. To that, Kuruvilla writes, "it is not unwarranted that a clever writer would utilize a phrase in a *double entendre* – in a figurative sense (seeing nakedness = sexual act), as well as in a literal sense (seeing nakedness = seeing nakedness), both in the same episode. In putting it this way, the author was simply emphasizing that Shem and Japheth, unlike Ham, refused to even see their father's (literal) nakedness, thus adding to their righteousness."

(BKW) – Taking notes from Hab. 2:15, Waltke suggests that Ham's sin was sexual in nature but not incestuous. "Although Noah sins in exposing himself through drink, he exposes himself in private, not in public. This makes Ham's invasion of his privacy more contemptable and his guilt more culpable. The Hebrew word means "to look at (searchingly), not harmless or accidental seeing...Probably just Ham's "prurient voyeurism" is meant. Voyeurism in general violates another's dignity and robs that one of his or her instinctive desire for privacy and propriety. It is a form of domination...Noah's leaven of exposing himself spread to Ham's homosexual, parent-dishonoring voyeurism and will sour fully into Canaan's rampant sexual perversions so that the land will vomit them out."

(NAC) – In questioning why Noah's curse was directed at Canaan and not Ham, Mathews states, "Because of this unity of father-son, the character of the father is anticipated in the deeds of the sons. Hebrew theology recognized that due to parental influence future generations usually committed the same acts as their fathers whether for ill or good. In this case the curse is directed at Ham's son as Ham's just deserts for the disrespect he had toward his own father, Noah. Yet the imprecations was spoken against future generations

of Canaanites who would suffer subjugation “not because of the sins of Ham, but because they themselves acted like Ham, because of their own transgressions.””

(BKW) – “The curse placed upon Canaan links him with the curse on the Serpent and on Cain...However, the general curse is not without exception...The family of the Canaanite prostitute Rahab will become part of the covenant people and the family of the Judean Achan will be cut off. When Israel behaves like the Canaanites, the land also vomits them out.”

(PTW) – “Why did the curse fall on Canaan? First, because Noah likely detected in Canaan the evil traits he had seen in his father. Canaan was a bad apple who did not fall far from the tree. Second, this curse was a prophetic oracle...Third, Canaan was the father of the Canaanites, the depraved nemesis of Israel. Therefore the curse fell on Israel’s future enemies.”

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