

GENESIS
Chapter 9:24-26

Technical Notes of Matthew Henry

(24) And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. (25) And he said, Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (26) And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

I. Here, Noah comes to himself: He *awoke from his wine*. Sleep cured him, and, we may suppose, so cured him that he never relapsed into that sin afterwards. Those that sleep as Noah did should awake as he did, and not as that drunkard (Prov. 23:35) who says when he awakes, *I will seek it yet again*.

II. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and, like dying Jacob, he tells his sons what shall befall them, ch. 49:1.

1. He pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham (v. 25), in whom Ham is himself cursed, either because this son of his was now more guilty than the rest, or because the posterity of this son was afterwards to be rooted out of their land, to make room for Israel. And Moses here records it for the animating of Israel in the wars of Canaan; though the Canaanites were a formidable people, yet they were of old an accursed people, and doomed to ruin. The particular curse is, *A servant of servants* (that is, the meanest and most despicable servant) *shall he be, even to his brethren*. Those who by birth were his equals shall by conquest be his lords. This certainly points at the victories obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were all either put to the sword or put under tribute (Josh. 9:23; Judg. 1:28, 30, 33, 35), which happened not till about 800 years after this. Note: (1) God often visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially when the children inherit the fathers' wicked dispositions, and imitate the fathers' wicked practices, and do nothing to cut off the entail of the curse. (2) Disgrace is justly put upon those that put disgrace upon others, especially that dishonour and grieve their own parents. An undutiful child that mocks at his parents is *no more worthy to be called a son*, but deserves to be *made as a hired servant*, nay, as *a servant of servants*, among his brethren. (3) Though divine curses operate slowly, yet, first or last, they will take effect. The Canaanites were under a curse of slavery, and yet, for a great while, had the dominion; for a family, a people, a person, may lie under the curse of God, and yet may long prosper in the world, till the measure of their iniquity, like that of the Canaanites, be full. Many are marked for ruin that are not yet ripe for ruin. Therefore, *Let not thy heart envy sinners*.

2. He entails a blessing upon Shem and Japheth.

(1) He blesses Shem, or rather blesses God for him, yet so that it entitles him to the greatest honour and happiness imaginable, v. 26. Observe, (a) He calls the Lord *the God of Shem*; and happy, thrice happy, *is that people whose God is the LORD*, Ps. 144:15. All blessings are included in this. This was the blessing conferred on Abraham and his seed; the God of heaven was *not ashamed to be called their God*, Heb. 11:16. Shem is sufficiently recompensed for his respect to his father by this, that the Lord himself puts this honour upon him, *to be his God*, which is a sufficient recompense for all our services and all our sufferings for his name. (b) He gives to God the glory of that good work which Shem had done, and, instead of blessing and praising him that

was the instrument, he blesses and praises God that was the author. Note: The glory of all that is at any time well done, by ourselves or others, must be humbly and thankfully transmitted to God, who works all our good works in us and for us. When we see men's good works we should glorify, not them, but *our Father*, Matt. 5:16. Thus David, in effect, blessed Abigail, when he *blessed God* that sent her (1 Sam. 25:32, 33), for it is an honour and a favour to be employed for God and used by him in doing good. (c) He foresees and foretells that God's gracious dealings with Shem and his family would be such as would evidence to all the world that he was the God of Shem, on which behalf thanksgivings would by many be rendered to him: *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem*. (d) It is intimated that the church should be built up and continued in the posterity of Shem; for of him came the Jews, who were, for a great while, the only professing people God had in the world. (e) Some think reference is here had to Christ, who was the Lord God that, in his human nature, should descend from the loins of Shem; for of him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. (f) Canaan is particularly enslaved to him. *He shall be his servant*. Note: Those that have the Lord for their God shall have as much of the honour and power of their world as he sees good for them.