



# Bible Study

March 18, 2015

Gen 9:18-10:1

Isaiah 26:21-27:9

Proverbs 12:23-13:9

Genesis 9:18-10:1 (NKJV) -

Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. 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 Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant." And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died. Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

Proverbs 12:23-13:9 (NKJV) - A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness. The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor. Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray. The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession. In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death. A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence. He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction. The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. A righteous man hates lying, but a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame. Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but wickedness overthrows the sinner. There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. The ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke. The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

Isaiah 26:21-27:9 (NKJV) - For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain. In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea. In that day sing to her, "A vineyard of red wine! I, the LORD, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day. Fury is not in Me. Who would set briers and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. Has He struck Israel as He struck those who struck him? Or has He been slain according to the slaughter of those who were slain by Him? In measure, by sending it away, you contended with it. He removes it by His rough wind in the day of the east wind. Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: When he makes all the stones of the altar like chalk stones that are beaten to dust, wooden images and incense altars shall not stand.

### **Commentary -**

In today's reading from Genesis, we reach the end of the story of Noah, and read of a shameful episode in Noah's life. That this episode is recorded here is important for several reasons. First, we read in Genesis 3, after the fall of humanity into sinfulness, the promise of God that the Seed of the Woman would some day triumph over the serpent who had led humanity to sell itself into slavery to sin and death. In Genesis chapter 5, at Noah's birth, it is prophesied that through Noah, God will save the world. And this is the correct framework from which we understand the story of the Flood. Through Noah and his family's righteousness amidst a world given over to sinfulness and destruction, God saves His Creation. The Creation, this world, is saved from the destruction brought upon it by man's wickedness; it is saved from humanity through the waters of the Flood, after which a new humanity can be formed from Noah's seed, just as in Baptism, our old, distorted human nature which we have inherited from our forebears is drowned in the waters and we receive a new human nature in the likeness of the Risen Christ, so that we all become brothers and sisters in Christ, and His Mother, the Theotokos, is the mother of us all.

Though Noah shows us a type, or an image, or a prefigurement of what Christ will accomplish once and for all, he himself does not accomplish it. He is, in the end, a sinner as we all are, in need of repentance and reconciliation to God. He is not a Saint and a great Prophet because he was in every way perfect, but because he faithfully followed the Lord and repented of his sins in a time in which sin ruled the earth. And so Genesis tells us this story, of Noah's sin, to show that he is not the Messiah, not the One ultimately promised by God to restore entry to Paradise. Though over the long arc of his life he followed God in faithfulness, in this moment he yields to his flesh, becomes drunk on wine, and passes out, drunk, in open view.

Further, however, we see in the actions and reactions of Noah's three sons both a glimpse into the future, as their father will prophesy, and a powerful image of sinfulness. While Ham sees his father's humiliation of himself as a reason for gossip and mockery, his other sons, Shem and Japheth, cover their father's nakedness without even looking upon it themselves. We see here two approaches, two ways in which we can react to the sins and failings of those around us. We can look upon the sins and failings of others and take delight in them, spreading word of them around far and wide, criticizing them to run them down and raise ourselves up. We can mock and scoff at others for their mistakes and bad choices. We can relish it when the consequences of those bad actions come upon them.

When we react this way to the sins of others, however, God makes to us a rather heavy promise

in today's reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. When Israel and then Judah were destroyed and sent into exile, there were those around them who rejoiced and laughed and mocked. Not only did the Assyrians and Babylonians relish their conquests, but the Edomites and the Moabites and other neighboring nations saw Israel and Judah's falls as opportunities for them to enlarge their own territory and influence. In the end, however, through Isaiah, God asks, "Has He struck Israel as He struck those who struck him? Or has He been slain according to the slaughter of those who were slain by Him?"

As great and weighty as the judgment that fell upon Israel and Judah was, the judgment that befell those who had once mocked and rejoiced at her humiliation was far greater and far heavier. It is worse, and more wicked, to call attention to the sins and failings of others, to rejoice in them, to mock them, than it is to commit those sins in the first place. In truth, a sinner who repents often finds themselves drawn closer to God, growing in the likeness of Christ, through that repentance after the sin has taken place. On the other hand, nothing is farther away from the heart of God than to delight in wickedness or in seeing another fall. It is for this reason that St. Paul frequently lists gossip and slander right alongside sins like theft, murder, and sexual immorality; things utterly foreign to God and to our Salvation.

Shem and Japheth, on the other hand show us another way. They seek as best they can to remain ignorant of the depth of their father's fall, and to cover it over, to allow others to remain ignorant of it. They do not want to look and see themselves, nor do they want others to have the chance to look and see. This is not deception; some kind of lie to preserve their father's reputation, after all, this story was preserved for the ages. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that this sin and shame belong to Noah alone, and are his to repent of before his God. Shem and Japheth have their own sins of which to repent as they seek to faithfully walk with the Lord.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, let us deal with all other people with this same charity. When we do look at others, let us not look for sin, or for failings. Let us not try to pick out where a person is wrong so that we can demean them and set ourselves up as more righteous, or more pious, or more intelligent. Rather, let us rejoice with others where and when they are right, and delight in the good when it comes even to those who might be considered our enemies. May God give to each of us the grace to see our own sins, and not to judge our brothers and sisters.

### Questions to Ponder -

- 1) A great deal of our modern media, even what is called 'News' is today made up of dredged up details and scandals from the personal lives of politicians and other celebrities. Given what the Holy Scriptures teach us about gossip and delighting in the misfortune of others, what might be a Christian response to these kind of topics when they come up among our friends and co-workers?
- 2) Today's reading from Proverbs points out that the wise person is often silent, even when they have knowledge, while the foolish person is always quick to speak. Think of times when you have spoken and ought instead to have remained silent.
- 3) In today's Isaiah reading, Isaiah says that the sign that Israel has truly repented of her sin of idolatry would be the day that the idols and their shrines would no longer exist in the land. Think of some of the sins that you find yourself confessing frequently. What are some ways in which you could change your day-to-day life or your home that would help you break away from those sins, and remove future temptation?

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