

NEEDED: A NEW HEART

8 ²⁰Then Noah built an altar to Jehovah, and taking some of all the ceremonially clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹And Jehovah smelled the sweet aroma and said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again destroy every living creature, as I have done. ²²As long as the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens. All the creatures with which the land teems, and all the fish of the sea, are delivered into your hand. ³Everything that lives and moves shall be food for you. Just as I have given you the green plants, so now I give you all things. ⁴But meat with its life—which is its blood—you shall not eat. ⁵And surely for your lifeblood will I require an accounting; from every beast will I require it, and also from man. From each man I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. ⁶Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; because God made man in the image of God. ⁷As for you, be fruitful, and multiply; increase abundantly on the earth, and multiply upon it.

⁸Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you—all that come out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you; never again shall all mortal life be cut off by the waters of a flood; neither shall there ever again be a flood to destroy the earth.

¹²And God said, This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between me and you and every living creature that is with you, a perpetual covenant for all generations to come. ¹³I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I bring a cloud over the earth, the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all mortal life. ¹⁶When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it, and so be reminded of the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of every kind that is upon the earth. ¹⁷So God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all mortal life that is upon the earth.

¹⁸Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹These three men were the sons of Noah; and by these three the whole earth was populated. ²⁰Now Noah became a tiller of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹Then he drank of the wine produced by his vineyard, and he became drunk. And he lay naked in his tent. ²²Then Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers who were outside. ²³And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon their shoulders, and walking with their backs toward their father, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

²⁴Then Noah awoke from his sleep induced by the wine, and knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵Then he said, Cursed be Canaan. The lowliest of servants shall he be to his brothers. ²⁶And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷And he said, May God increase Japheth's possessions, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem. And let Canaan be his servant.

²⁸After the flood Noah lived three hundred and fifty years. ²⁹Altogether Noah lived nine hundred and fifty years, and he died. (Gen. 8:20-9:29)

Introduction

In October of 1922, the famous British philosopher and writer, Bertrand Russell, had just finished work on his latest book, *The Problem of China*. In this book Russell was seeking to offer “solutions” to the economic and political problems plaguing the vast nation of China. When a colleague of Russell’s, the novelist Joseph Conrad, read the book, he wrote back:

I have never been able to find in any man’s book or any man’s talk anything convincing enough to stand up for a moment against my deep-seated sense of fatality governing this man-inhabited world. ... the only remedy for Chinamen and for rest of us is the change of hearts. (quoted by Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*, Harper and Row, N.Y., pp.12-13)

Joseph Conrad was one of the few writers and thinkers of his day (or of any day) to rightly evaluate the human dilemma and to proclaim that what is needed is nothing less than a new heart. The Word of God confronts us with this same truth by means of the history recorded here in Genesis 8-9. Because sin reigns in the human heart, and from there exercises its corrupting influence, we must recognize the need for a new heart.

I. You Need a New Heart, Because a Renewed Environment Cannot Eradicate Sin

Following the Great Flood, the LORD declares, *“the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth”* (Gen. 8:21.) Compare this statement with that recorded in Genesis 6:5, which is describing the state of the human race just prior to the flood: *“And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every conception of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* What this reveals is that not even a cataclysmic flood could change the nature of man’s heart. As we come to learn from Genesis 9:1-17, not even a renewed environment can eradicate sin from the human heart.

Genesis 9, (as did Genesis 8), is describing a renewed creation, but with some modifications when compared with the original creation. In Genesis 9:1 we read that God blessed Noah, giving to him and his sons the commandment to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Compare this with Genesis 1:28a, *“God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue*

it.” Genesis 9:2 states that God renewed man’s dominion over all the creatures of the world, but this time it is a dominion by fear, *“the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth.”* Again, compare this with Genesis 1:28b, where the LORD commands the man to exercise *“dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”* Genesis 9:3 indicates that the LORD again gave man permission to eat of all the creation, but this time He includes the eating of meat: *“Everything that lives and moves shall be food for you. Just as I have given you the green plants, so now I give you all things.”* Note how this compares with Genesis 1:29, *“God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that bears fruit with seed in it; to you they shall be for food.’”* In conclusion, Genesis 9:7 once more repeats the command to be fruitful and multiply in the earth.

Noah and his family now find themselves the sole inhabitants of a renewed creation, but one that bears the scars of sin. It is now necessary for the LORD to state the prohibition against murder and institute capital punishment as the penalty for violating the prohibition (Gen. 9:5-6.) The LORD establishes a covenant with Noah and the creation (Gen. 9:8-17), pledging to preserve it from “premature” universal judgment until the final day—so that the LORD’s work of redemption can be accomplished. Noah and his family are now living in a renewed creation, but one that needs divine protection: protection from man’s own violence and protection from the outbreak of God’s righteous judgment. Although Noah finds himself in a renewed creation, sin has not been eradicated. On the contrary, it is residing in the human heart and it is exerting its corrupting influence throughout the world. We must honestly recognize the need for a new heart, because a renewed environment cannot eradicate sin.

II. You Need a New Heart, Because the Old Heart is Under the Dominion of Sin

Genesis 9:18-19 identifies the sons of Noah as the new progenitors of the human race. Now that the apostate line has been eradicated, and it is the men who have direct connections with the covenant line who are the new progenitors of the race, one might be led to have good hopes for the future.

But several troubling truths very quickly become apparent. First, it becomes apparent that not all who are identified with the covenant line are a part of the covenant (as is the case with Ham.) Second, it becomes apparent that even those who truly belong to the covenant of God are not without sin, (as is the case with Noah.) The lives of Noah’s sons demonstrate the dominion of sin and the need for a new heart. But they also demonstrate the power of God to create a new heart and counteract and overcome the dominion of sin.

In the case of Ham there is evidenced the inheritance of the sinful nature and the natural heart under the dominion of sin. Ham names his son *“Canaan,”* (from the

Hebrew כָּנַע, meaning “to bow down, to be subdued, to submit.”) In so naming his son, there is revealed Ham’s desire for ungodly dominion. We are called to exercise a holy dominion over the creation (cp. Gen. 1:28,) but here in Ham is evidenced the desire to exercise an ungodly dominion over one’s fellow man. As we shall see, the penalty will be subjection under the dominion of God and His redeemed (Gen. 9:25.)

Furthermore, Ham is not only not repelled by the sight of his father’s lewdness, he has a desire to exploit it. He informs his brothers, in the evil spirit of inviting them to come and see. Here is the spirit of the devil; not only indulging the sinful desires, but tempting others to do so also. Far from honoring his father and seeking to restore his father’s honor, Ham indulges his perverse desires at his father’s expense. The whole episode involving Noah, Ham and Canaan emphasizes the fact that the sinful nature is passed on from generation to generation and the natural heart is under the dominion of sin. The sinful nature continues to reside in the heart of each succeeding generation unless there is conversion. Note: The curse falling upon the offender’s son is in keeping with the principle expressed in Exodus 20:5, which declares that the LORD punishes *“the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”*

In the case of Shem there is the evidence of a new heart, recreated by God and no longer under the dominion of sin. Shem resists the temptation to entertain any lewd and perverse passion and to further dishonor his father. Shem takes the initiative (*“Shem and Japheth”*) in covering his father. In so doing they undertake a God-like activity, the LORD covered the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve: *“Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them”* (Gen. 3:21.) Shem is identified with the LORD (*“Jehovah, the God of Shem”*) as one who has been regenerated and brought into the covenant of redemption.

In the case of Japheth there is evidence given of the promise that the LORD will renew the hearts of His chosen people. In his prophecy Noah declares that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem and share in Shem’s dominion over Canaan.

Here is the promise that Japheth will be brought into God’s covenant people (note Jn. 10:16, printed below) and share in Christ’s final dominion (note Psalm 149:7,9, printed below.)

Jesus said, *“I have other sheep that are not a part of this sheepfold. I must bring them also They too shall heed my voice; and they shall become one flock, with one shepherd.”* (Jn. 10:16)

To execute vengeance upon the nations, ... ⁹to execute upon them the judgment written; this honor has all his saints [i.e., all the LORD's redeemed people]. Praise Jehovah. (Psl. 149:7,9)

We must honestly recognize the need for a new heart, because the old heart, apart from the saving work of God, is under the dominion of sin. We must appreciate the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 15:19-20, *"... out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimony, slander. ²⁰These are the things which defile the man."*

Conclusion

Joseph Conrad was one of the few writers and thinkers of his day (or of any day) to rightly evaluate the human dilemma and recognize that what is needed is nothing less than a new heart. But after making that evaluation, Joseph Conrad was left in despair, he went on to write:

The only remedy for Chinamen and for the rest of us is the change of hearts. But looking at the history of the last 2,000 years there is not much reason to expect that thing, even if man has taken to flying. (*Modern Times*, p. 83.)

Joseph Conrad saw that men need new hearts, and he also recognized that there was no way in the world that men could transform their own hearts. For Joseph Conrad this proved to be a dilemma that led to despair, because Joseph Conrad never looked to God. As the Lord Jesus teaches us in Mark 10:27, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."*

This is the message of the Scriptures, as presented here in Genesis 8:20-9:29, is not only do we need a new heart, but also, God is able to provide us with a new heart. That is the promise He makes: *"A new heart ... will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezek. 36:26.)

Availing ourselves of that divine promise, let us offer up the prayer, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"* (Psl. 51:10.)