

# GENESIS—WEEK 9

## STARTING OVER



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is The Creation by Michael van der Borch (~1300 – 1370)  
On display at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague, Netherlands*

After the flood, and with the LORD’s promise to never destroy everything again, things start going downhill again. Noah has a bit too much wine, and Ham does the wrong thing in response. Noah calls him out for this to an amazing extent.

By the time this section is over, man will have even tried to build the tower of Babel—which is nuts.

---

We’re pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

Thank you.

Genesis 9:18–11:9 — Starting Over  
Copyright 2023 F. Michael Slay  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*All scripture references are noted. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NKJV stands for the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.*

1 Genesis 9:18–23 (ESV)

*The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.*

*Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.*

This passage is confusing to modern readers because we think the word “wine” means something similar to modern wine. It doesn’t. Modern winemaking produces a consistent product. We have good and bad vintages, but to a primitive palate, all our wines would be awesome.

Noah couldn’t measure sugar, acidity, or alcohol content. He didn’t even have a special yeast to add to the juice. He had to count on whatever was on the grape skins to start the fermentation. The word “wine” here really just means grape juice. It might not have had any alcohol at all.

[https://www.guildsomm.com/public\\_content/features/articles/b/rod\\_phillips/posts/ancient-wine-then-and-now](https://www.guildsomm.com/public_content/features/articles/b/rod_phillips/posts/ancient-wine-then-and-now)

So, you could drink a lot of “wine” on a hot day and not feel anything—or you could get plastered. Noah got plastered. And notice that the text says, “Noah **began** to be a man of the soil.” He didn’t have any experience making (or drinking) wine, so he had no alcohol tolerance. A quart of a good batch would have gotten him falling down drunk. Thus, his failure to get into his pajamas isn’t all that surprising.

That’s why what Ham did was wrong. Noah wasn’t the kind of guy who needed someone to confront his drinking problem; he just needed to sleep it off. Ham should have covered him up and kept quiet.

Even just ignoring him would have been okay.

---

Prayer is a lens through which we see God. He speaks to us through His written word and through “what happens.” If we ask Him for guidance, He will provide.

*“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” — Luke 11:9, 13*

But the way we ask sets up how He answers. Some prayers are better lenses than others. A prayer should provide useful context for interpreting His response.

For example, one might say, “If you want me to do this, help it happen; if you don’t, close the door.”

2 Genesis 9:24–29 (ESV)

*When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”*

*He also said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.”*

*After the flood Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.*

Curiously, Noah didn’t curse Ham, *his youngest son*; he cursed Ham’s youngest son.

*The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.* — Genesis 10:6 (ESV)

This must have happened quite some time after the flood. Grape vines take many years to become productive.

We aren’t told why Noah chose to curse Canaan. There must have been some reason, but it wasn’t important enough to include. What is important is that the descendants of Canaan will end up being conquered by the descendants of Shem (specifically, the Israelites).

But an unintended consequence turned out to be remarkably significant. Some Americans used this passage to justify the enslavement of Africans. That’s not only evil; it doesn’t make sense. It was the other sons of Ham who settled in Africa; Canaan obviously didn’t.

The blame for this doesn’t solely fall on the crackpots who dreamed up that crazy excuse for slavery.

Anyone with a clue who failed to call them out bears some responsibility.

---

Truth is the cornerstone of Christianity. Jesus said, “I am the truth.”

*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”* — John 14:6a (ESV)

Jesus isn’t just truthful, He **is** the truth. So, our worship of Him as Lord of all creation includes defending truth—especially against lies about the Bible.

Yes, it’s uncomfortable to challenge someone about a lie, but simply quoting scripture or citing some other fact isn’t all that confrontational. Failure to defend truth is a serious error.

The toughest part about this is the timing. When someone spouts a falsehood about the Bible, or about Christ, or about the church, the best chance to speak up is right then. Yet, a hasty reply can do more harm than good. We need supernatural help to keep from blowing the chance.

Pray for boldness in defending God’s word. Ask Him to give you courage seasoned with grace.

Ask the Holy Spirit, in advance, to help you speak eloquently and lovingly when the time comes.

3 Genesis 10:1–14 (NKJV)

*Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.*

*The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.*

*The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.*

*Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.” And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).*

*Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim).*

The descendants of Noah scattered around the world and often named the places where they settled. *Mizraim* is the Hebrew word for Egypt. *Put* is to the west of Egypt, and *Cush* to the south. *Canaan* is the land just to the east of the Mediterranean Sea.

Nimrod was a legendary character, but the Hebrew translated as “*before the LORD*,” can mean “against the LORD.” It’s literally “to the face of LORD.” The same word is used in the first commandment when the LORD says, “You shall have no other gods before me,” (literally “to my face.”) While “*before the LORD*,” is the primary translation, Nimrod’s life story lends weight to the alternative.

There is considerable evidence that he was a tyrant and that he was involved in the construction of the tower of Babel.

---

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” — John Dalberg-Acton

It’s more accurate to say that power tends to make our corruption manifest, rather than produces it, but Acton’s cliché is still a great truth. Power is poisonous. In modern society, success acts the same way. Garrison Keillor once said, of one of his fictional characters, “Like many successful people, he is full of himself to an amazing extent.”

Pray for humility. We all want it. Or do we? Can humility be learned without great cost? How does one seriously pursue humility? Obviously, that includes prayer, but what does one specifically ask for?

Start by asking for the strength to endure the lessons.

4 Genesis 10:15–32 (NKJV)

*Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These were the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations.*

*And children were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arphaxad begot Salah, and Salah begot Eber. To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.*

*These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.*

The passage seems to zoom in on Eber—Shem's great-grandson (or great-great-grandson). Eber is mentioned even before Shem's sons are named.

This part of Genesis is tracing the genealogy from Noah to Abraham, and Eber is a key stopover along the way. Eber is the root word of "Hebrew." This text shows Eber as the great-grandson of Shem. However, the Septuagint has Arphaxad begetting Cainan and Cainan begetting Salah, making Eber Shem's great-great-grandson. That agrees with Luke 3:36.

Extra generations are no big deal in Hebrew genealogies. That's why this passage calls Shem, "*the father of all the children of Eber.*" Some translations render this as, "*the ancestor of all the children of Eber.*"

That's okay, but not literal. The Hebrew word used has the same root as "abba" (father).

---

Yesterday's DEEP raised the issue of seeking humility. But what is it, really?

In the chapter in *Mere Christianity* titled "The Great Sin", CS Lewis describes humility as the opposite of pride. Of pride he says, "Greed will make a man want money ... but only up to a point. ... Pride makes a man with [\$1 million] a year want [\$2 million]." My favorite illustration of this comes from Kurt Vonnegut. He tells of saying to his pal, Joseph Heller, at a party given by a billionaire, that their host had made more money yesterday than Heller made from his famous novel, *Catch-22*, over its entire history.

Heller is alleged to have replied, "Yes, but I have something he'll never have — enough."

5 Genesis 11:1–9 (ESV)

*Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.*

This happened during the life of Peleg, not after all the events of Chapter 10.

*To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. — Genesis 10:25 (ESV)*

When they said, “*and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth,*” they were directly defying God’s desire that they *be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it* (Genesis 9:7b, ESV).

This is a perfect portrait of sin. They wanted to resist God’s command by making a name for themselves. They think that if their reputation is big enough, they can break away from God and run their own lives. Fat chance.

*These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. — Genesis 10:32 (ESV)*

This is the same as what Adam and Eve did. Sin is about denying the Lordship of God and going off independently. Conversely, being a Christian is all about embracing that Lordship.

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. — Romans 10:9b (ESV)*

---

Continuing our discussion of humility—CS Lewis describes humility, not as thinking less of oneself, but as not thinking of oneself at all. (*Mere Christianity*, p112) In letter 14 of *The Screwtape Letters*, he writes:

“[God] wants to bring the man to a state of mind where he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another.”

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What is your position on the consumption of alcohol by Christians?
2. Honest errors about scripture are common, but what are some straight up lies?
3. How does one gain true humility?
4. Can you see your own pride?
5. Have you known someone who seems to display the humility Lewis (as Screwtape) described?