

Ask Away – January 3

1) Why did Noah curse Canaan, Ham's son, instead of Ham? (Gen 9:25).

Suppose you went over to the home of your best friend and found him lying passed out, drunk and naked in the living room. What should you do? Out of love and consideration (or just plain decency), you should wrap a blanket around him and make sure he's all right. But what if, instead, you left him there and then called some of your other friends to come over and take a look? I think most people would say that there was something wrong with you! Well, there was definitely something wrong with Ham, and the OT reveals that whatever deviant tendencies there were in Ham became immorality and perversion of the worst kind in the lives of Canaan and his children (cf. Lev 18:3–29; Deut 20:17–18). Thus it seems best to understand the curse on Canaan as prophetic—God enabled Noah to foresee the wickedness of Canaan's descendants and prompted him to pronounce a curse of judgment on them. And sure enough, when Joshua conquered Canaan, Noah's curse came to pass.

It should be added that this verse has been wrongly appealed to in the past to justify the enslavement of the African people (or anyone with black skin). Noah did *not* curse Ham or Ham's other children who settled in northern Africa: Cush (basically Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt) and Put (Libya/Sudan). The curse was on Canaan and his descendants, who settled in what is now the state of Israel. Any attempt to use this verse to excuse the abuse and oppression of blacks is disgraceful and immoral.