

GENESIS 10:1-5

(THE TABLE OF NATIONS, PART 1: THE SONS OF JAPHETH)

Chapter 10 of Genesis is a lot like Chapter 5 in one respect. It lists names of people and it includes just a little bit of other minor information coming along with those names. For this reason, it's often passed through quickly and without a lot of study or thought. But it's been placed in the Bible by God and therefore it is something we should deem as important as He does.

This chapter is the last time that all of the people of the world are listed together in a family type of arrangement. Many of the people groups mentioned here though will show up again in the Bible, particularly in future prophecy.

So understanding who these people were and where they migrated to can help us to understand who is being spoken of in prophecy, including future battles.

Without this knowledge, the events of the world today seem unpredictable and frightening, but knowing who these people became reveals to us that God is in complete control of all things, including our present trying times and the future which we are rushing headlong into.

I hope you'll allow me a couple minutes to read Martin Luther's thoughts on this chapter –

“Whenever I read these names, I think of the wretched state of the human race. Even though we have the most excellent gift of reason, we are nevertheless so overwhelmed by misfortunes that we are ignorant not only of our own origin and the lineal descent of our ancestors but even of God Himself, our Creator. Look into the historical accounts of all nations. If it were not for Moses alone, what would you know about the origin of man?...

Of this wretched state, that is, of our awful blindness, we are reminded by the passage before us, which gives us instruction about things that are

unknown to the whole world. What do we have about the very best part of the second world besides words, not to mention the first one, which antedated the Flood? The Greeks wanted to have the account of their activities preserved, the Romans likewise; but how insignificant this is in comparison with the earlier times, concerning which Moses has drawn up a list of names in this passage, not of deeds!

Hence one must consider this chapter of Genesis a mirror in which to discern what we human beings are, namely, creatures so marred by sin that we have no knowledge of our own origin, not even of God Himself, our Creator, unless the Word of God reveals these sparks of divine light to us from afar. Then what is more futile than boasting of one's wisdom, riches, power, and other things that pass away completely?

Therefore we have reason to regard the Holy Bible highly and to consider it a most precious treasure. This very chapter, even though it is considered full of dead words, has in it the thread that is drawn from the first world to the middle and to the end of all things. From Adam the promise concerning Christ is passed on to Seth; from Seth to Noah; from Noah to Shem; and from Shem to this Eber, from whom the Hebrew nation received its name as the heir for whom the promise about the Christ was intended in preference to all other peoples of the whole world. This knowledge the Holy Scriptures reveal to us. Those who are without them live in error, uncertainty, and boundless ungodliness; for they have no knowledge about who they are and whence they came."

Introduction: Martin Luther correctly came to the conclusion that this chapter contains the thread which started at creation and will continue until eternity. Without this link, there would be a tear in the fabric of our understanding about the things of God and the redemption of man. Because of this, we need to spend some time in chapter 10 and not hurry through it.

Text Verse: So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:3

Every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD includes passages which may seem tedious, but they contain deep riches of wisdom and truth. So, ...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blessings and the Curse

¹Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

This is now the fourth set of generations or genealogies that the Bible has given us. So far we've seen the generations of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 2; the generations of Adam in Genesis 5; the generations of Noah in Genesis 6; and now we've come to those of **the sons of Noah**.

Noah, which means "rest" safely came to the other side of the flood and received his rest. But from him came three sons, all of which were named in anticipation of growth. Shem means "name or fame" indicating he would expand and become well known.

Ham means "hot or passion" indicating anything but idleness, and Japheth means "to expand or enlarge." The world was going to move in many directions and these three sons would be the fathers of that human movement. In this chapter, the world will be divided into seventy nation groups. This then, is the table of the nations.

Before going any further, let's go back and look at the blessings and curse that were given by Noah to his sons. These will come into clarity of focus in the world, even as we know it today. And also from them will come many interesting biblical patterns.

Here is Noah's curse and blessings as we heard them the week before Palm Sunday –

Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren.”

²⁶ And he said:

“Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant.”

Because of what Noah’s youngest son Ham did, Ham’s youngest son Canaan was cursed. After this Shem and Japheth are mentioned, but Ham isn’t. Noah’s sons are listed here in chapter 10 and elsewhere in the Bible in order as Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Noah’s blessing to Shem said, “Blessed *be* the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant.” Rather than directly blessing Shem, Noah says, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem.” The blessing then is a spiritual one.

And the line of Shem since then has been the main spiritual line of man, including all three of the world’s monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism, and islam. Regardless of the validity of the religion, the spiritual nature of the people has continued for over 4000 years.

Ham is the second son and received no blessing or curse directly. Only his son was cursed, but implied in the curse of Canaan is the family of Ham in general. The curse is that they would be servants to their brothers.

The line of Ham, as we will explore in greater detail next week, has truly been the servants to the world in several ways. From the line of Ham have come the great technological and physical achievements of the earth. They are the great artisans and builders.

And finally, Japheth is mentioned last. In his blessing, Noah said, “May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant.”

Today we will see how accurately this was fulfilled in the line of Japheth, in both a literal and a spiritual sense. From Japheth have come the great scientific and philosophical achievements of humanity.

In a previous Genesis sermon we saw that in the book of Acts, the same order in which these three sons are mentioned is the same order in which salvation through Christ came to the people of the world. The sons of Shem include Israel, and they received Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2.

The sons of Ham came next when the Ethiopian eunuch received Christ and was baptized in chapter 8 of Acts. And finally, the sons of Japheth were represented in chapter 10 when Cornelius the Italian received Christ together with his family.

But in what is an equally amazing pattern each of these three groups specifically came seeking Jesus at one time or another and when they do, they are mentioned in this same order – Shem, Ham, and then Japheth. The three groups who seek Him are shepherds, wise men, and Greeks.

The shepherds who sought Jesus at His birth in Luke 2 were sons of Shem. The Magi in Matthew 2, came seeking Him some time later and were probably sons of Ham from Arabia. And finally, the Greeks who sought Jesus in John 12 were from Japheth.

And then again, we can look and find another biblical pattern which follows these three sons and the achievements of their descendants. It is reflected in the order of the three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

These three accounts are amazingly similar and yet they contain different information and are directed to different audiences. And these audiences are in the order of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Matthew is obviously directed to the sons of Shem – the Semites, and in particular the Jewish people. In Mark, Jesus is depicted as the servant, just as the people of Ham are noted as the servant people of the world. And

there is no doubt who Luke is directed to – the Greek mind, which comes from the line of Japheth.

If you've ever wondered how the gospel of Jesus can affect people from every culture, every race, and every ethnic group, it's because it is directed in various ways to the people of the world, all who came from one of these three sons of Noah. The gospel is a message for all the people of the world and a message of hope which can connect with the thought process of any mind.

And if these wonderful points so far weren't enough, there is yet another beautiful picture of the universality of the message of Jesus and His work accomplished on the cross of Calvary. It is prominently displayed in the crucifixion account where each of these three branches of mankind took part in His crucifixion.

The sons of Shem were morally and spiritually responsible for His death. They sold Him, they tried Him, they convicted Him, and they handed Him over. As they did, they cried out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Ham was represented there too. Simon of Cyrene acted as the servant, just as Noah prophesied, when he carried the physical burden of the cross for Jesus, leading him to the Place of the Skull where He would be crucified and die.

And Japheth was there as well. His sons were given the executive responsibility for what occurred when Pilate tried Him and the Roman soldiers actually pierced His body through with the nails and the spear.

From what may have seemed like an innocuous sentence about three sons of Noah in an otherwise mundane seeming chapter of the Bible come patterns and parallels which show us both the immense wisdom of God and the wonderful love of Him for all the people of the world who seek Him out.

II. May God Enlarge Japheth

²The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

⁵From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

Despite being mentioned in the first verse as Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the lineage of Japheth is given first now because he was the firstborn of Noah and possibly also because he was the group of people furthest removed geographically from the Israelites and therefore the people who would have the least immediate affect on them from a biblical perspective.

In this account, fifteen names are mentioned including Japheth, seven sons of Japheth, and seven grandsons.

Some of these names are mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and even in the book of Revelation as people who will come against Israel in the future. In the case of Ezekiel 38, the battles may actually occur in our lifetime... and maybe even in the next few years.

These sons of Japheth became the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles. Because of this, they would more easily branch out around the world than Noah's other sons. From the coastlines, they would become the great sea-going adventurers of the world.

Early on, the descendants of Japheth, also known as the Aryans, split into two main groups. One group settled in the direction of Europe and the other went towards India. These groups, although varying widely in skin tone, are of the same basic stock of people.

What's really nifty about these two divisions of Japheth is that even apart from the Bible, they both trace their ancestry back to Japheth. The Greeks

claim an ancestor named Iapetos. A name which is extremely similar to the Hebrew name Yapheth.

In India, they have their own flood account which has many parallels to the biblical one. The great hero of their account is a guy named Satyaurata and he had three sons. The name of the oldest son is Iyapeti, again a name amazingly close to Yapheth.

The other two brothers were named Sharma and C'harma (Shem and Ham, or as Ham is pronounced in Hebrew Cham). This story says that C'harma was cursed by his father because he laughed at him when he got drunk. If that's not the biblical story in a nutshell, I don't know what kind of nutshell you're trying to crack.

There is no doubt that what is given in Genesis 10 is truly the Word of God telling us the amazing details of real people and real matters concerning the beginnings of the post flood world.

Because the sons of Japheth are the predominant people of India and Europe, they are therefore the source of most American families and groups as well. As you can see, the sons of Japheth have widely enlarged over the centuries, thus fulfilling the meaning of his name – to enlarge.

But the enlargement isn't just physical and geographical in nature. It also includes enlargement in the scientific, philosophical, intellectual, and spiritual disciplines as well.

The descendants of Japheth have been at the forefront of scientific understanding, rivaled only by the sons of Shem. History is replete with names like Newton, Pasteur, Galileo, Lavoisier, Kepler, Copernicus, Faraday, and on and on. All of these and so many more have fulfilled the blessing pronounced on Japheth so long ago. Even Bill Gates and Steve Jobs are from the line of Japheth.

In the curiously intellectual realm, it's evident that most of those who developed the great philosophic disciplines and the most noted

philosophers since then are from Japheth. And they continue to be dominated by this group of people.

The Greeks in particular began the western concepts of philosophy. Such great early classical philosophers like Thales, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Plato led into great minds like Parmenides, Protagoras, Socrates, Euclid, and Aristotle.

Later came the Hellenistic and Roman Philosophers and then the Western Medieval, Early Modern and Modern Philosophers, the majority of which are of the sons of Japheth. These great minds developed because of an ancient blessing by Noah on Japheth.

There's one more extremely important point to make about the sons of Japheth. The blessing on him didn't stop with the thought of "enlargement."

Remember what else Noah said about him, "And may he dwell in the tents of Shem." This isn't speaking of literally dwelling in tents, so it must be relevant to the first portion of the blessing.

Dr. Arthur Custance, from Toronto, noted that Japheth dwelling in Shem's tents means that he would come to share in the same inheritance as Shem – the spiritual one... carrying on the message of the cross of Jesus. If you understand what I just said, then you can understand the Bible in an entirely new way.

After the Jewish people rejected Christ, the spiritual banner of humanity which is the Christian message, was moved from Shem to Japheth. This isn't just a leap into speculation either. The Bible elsewhere speaks of dwelling in another's tent in this manner.

It is this group of people – the sons of Japheth – who has, for 2000 years held the spiritual primacy of the doctrines of Christ. And in a marriage which has proven to complete the message the scientific and philosophical doctrines of Japheth have been united to the theological message given to us by the sons of Shem.

In other words, it is the philosophy of people like Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas which has allowed us to grasp the nature of what the Bible speaks of in matters like the Trinity. This and many other concepts only come into clear focus from what the line of Japheth has brought us through philosophy. God makes no mistakes.

Those of you who listened to my sermon on Genesis 1:1 might remember what I'm talking about. How can we understand the nature of God who is revealed in the Bible? By understanding the concepts derived by the sons of Japheth. Noah's blessing upon Japheth is amazing when we see how it is literally fulfilled in this way.

Dr. Custance is exactly right about his conclusion. But to complete the thought about Japheth dwelling in Shem's tents, we need to stand back even further and look at how God both started and will complete His message to the world – through the Jewish people.

Dwelling in the tents of someone means that they encircle you. And the Bible, without any doubt, shows that the Jewish people will again be the focus of the world's spiritual attention, thus fulfilling the encircling effect of Shem around Japheth.

Let's stand back and look at the Bible from the widest angle possible. The line of the Messiah is established in Genesis with the son of Adam named Seth, then through Noah, and then through Shem. It then runs down through the Jewish people all the way to the end of the Gospel of John.

After John comes the book of Acts, the first 12 chapters of which are focused particularly on Peter who is the Apostle to the Jews. From chapter 13 until the end of Acts, the book is focused on the work of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. At this point the spiritual banner is being handed over to the sons of Japheth.

The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem speaking to the Jews and ends in Rome with these words, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

After Acts and its end in Rome, the next 13 epistles are written by Paul, specifically to the gentile people. After these letters though, the direction changes completely. The next book is called “Hebrews” and is written again to the Jewish people. After Hebrews comes James who writes to the 12 tribes scattered abroad.

The next two are written by Peter, the apostle to the Jews. From there are 1, 2, & 3 John which carry on the style and form of the Gospel of John. After John comes Jude which is almost a repetition of the words of Peter. These 8 letters from Hebrews to Jude lean toward the tent of Shem and serve a transitional purpose of leading up to the book of Revelation.

In Revelation, the first three chapters deal with the church, but from chapter 4 through 19 it deals solely with Israel and the end times. Finally, in chapter 19, Christ returns to Israel with the church and the book finishes off after three chapters of future events which combine the physical and spiritual. We see there the final merging of God’s people from both Jew and Gentile.

In other words, when one stands back and looks at the overall picture, the sons of Japheth, meaning the Church, truly dwell in the tents of Shem, being encompassed on all sides by his spiritual tent. It is the message of redemption found in the Person of Jesus, the greatest of all the descendants of Shem and our Lord and Savior.

III. The Japhethites Near You...

Although, this might be a bit easier with a chart in front of you, I want to give you the names of Japheth’s line again with the modern equivalent of who those people are. By doing this, you’ll see where they generally ended up in people groups.

Gomer – Germany, Crimea, Cambria, Celts

*Ashkenaz – Germany, Saxons, Scandinavia

*Riphath – Carpathians

*Togarmah – Armenians

Magog – Georgia, Scythians

Madai – Medes, Aryans, Indians of India
Javan – Ionians, Greeks, coastlands
*Elishah – Hellas
*Tarshish – Spain
*Kittim – Cyprus
*Dodanim – Rhodes (area of the Black Sea, Dardenelles)
Tubal - Tobolsk
Meshech – Moscow
Tiras – Thrace, Teutons

One thing to remember about biblical names is that they are often groups of people rather than individuals. In other words, when we just read the names Kittim and Dodanim we were reading plural names. That “im” at the end of the word is a plural marker, like our “s.” Some translations even change the name to end with an “s” or an “ite” for our benefit in stead of using the “im.”

So when you see a name like this as you’re reading, they are not the names of individuals, but of clans, families, or tribes. They probably got their name from a main figure within the tribe and that name was then identified with all of the people.

To help you get this, try to remember that when you see an “im” name, it’s like reading something that says, “The Garretts are all really handsome people.” You know it’s speaking of a clan bearing the name of Garrett. But... don’t always believe what you read. Not all Garretts are handsome like me.

I want to take a minute and read a portion of what Ray Stedman has to say about the sons of Japheth. This will help you to mentally understand much of what the Bible will speak of elsewhere.

As I said, what is especially important is how these people are mentioned in prophecies to come, some of which might be fulfilled in the very near future.

“We learn here that Japheth had seven sons, but only two of them are traced for us in any detail: The first son was Gomer. From this word,

Gomer, ... came the word, Gaul, or Gallic. These are the people, interestingly enough, to whom the New Testament Epistle to the Galatians is written. The Galatians were Gauls. Most of us have a Gallic or Celtic ancestry, and the Gauls and Celts were descendants of Gomer. They migrated to the north and settled in Spain, France and in Britain. From these Gauls come most of the early families of Western Europe and, consequently, of the Americas as well.

The oldest son of Gomer was Ashkenaz. He and his descendants first settled around the Black Sea and then moved north into a land which is called Ascenia, and which later became known as the Islands of Scandia, which we now know as Scandinavia. You can trace a direct link between Ashkenaz and Scandinavia. Another of the sons of Gomer was Riphath. Although we do not know too much about Riphath, we do know that he located in Central Europe, and some scholars feel that the word, Europe, itself comes from this name, Riphath. Another son is Togarmah. This name is easily traced. He was the ancestor of the present-day Turks and Armenians, who also migrated northward into Southern Germany. Certain scholars have felt that the word, Germany, derives from the word, Togarmah. If you drop the first syllable you have the basic root of Germany.

Two others of the sons of Japheth were Madai and Javan. These are easily recognizable in history: The Madai became the Medes, of the famous Medes and Persian Empire. Javan is unquestionably the ancestor of the Greeks. His name, Javan, is still found in Greece in the form of Ionia. The Ionic Sea and Ionian Peninsula all derive from this word Javan. His sons were Elishah, from which we get the Greek word, Helles (the Greeks are still called Hellenes), and Tarshish, whom most scholars associate with Spain; Kittim, which is the Island of Cyprus; and Dodanim, who settled around the Black Sea, and still finds a modern parallel in the word, the Dardanelles. These can all be traced by the geographical titles and place names they left behind.”

To close today’s sermon, I’d like to read you the 120th Psalm. It mentions dwelling in the tents of Meshech. Like I said, Meshech was a son of Japheth and is the basis for the name Moscow, thus representing Russia. The psalm

also mentions Kedar which was a son of Ishmael and therefore a son of Shem.

For 2000 years, the Jewish people were exiled around the world and dwelt in the tents of foreigners, but now God has restored them to their homeland. In His sovereign way, He has faithfully protected and returned His unfaithful people and He will continue to do so as the world comes against them.

Let's remember to pray for Israel – both the people and the land and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem...because when it comes, it will be under the blessed rule of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In my distress I cried to the LORD,
And He heard me.

² Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips
And from a deceitful tongue.

³ What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?

⁴ Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!

⁵ Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

⁶ My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.

⁷ *I am for* peace;

But when I speak, they *are* for war. Psalm 120

The Line of Japheth

Noah had three sons who came with him on the ark
And they each had a wife to carry on humanity's life spark

The genealogy of these sons starts in Ch 10 vs 1 of the book
Shem is first and then comes Ham and finally Japheth too
Don't just read this verse without taking a deeper look

Because these names hold immense and wonderful treasure for you

Shem's blessing was spiritual and spiritual he would be
Through his line came the very oracles of God
And also through Him came the Messiah for all the world to see
When he came among us, and on the earth He did trod

Ham received no blessing, but his son received a curse
Yes a servant of servants to his brethren he shall be
And the line of Ham fulfilled the words of this verse
Even to Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross to Calvary

Japheth was blessed with enlargement, like the spreading of a tree
And enlargement truly has been found in him
He spread out in science and also in philosophy
Greatness of the mind is the fruit of his tree's limb

And sons were born to Japheth after the flood
Seven sons he had who now fill all the land
Gomer, Magog, Madai and Javan carry on Japheth's blood
As do Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras across the world they fanned

And Gomer's sons are noted in the Genesis account
Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah, Gomer say's "They're mine!"
These sons add to Japheth's total head count
And even till today, we can identify them in Japheth's line

One other son of Japheth has children noted in the scroll
That son is Javan who had four sons of his own
Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim are counted in the roll
And these sons spread out, their own seed having sown

From this line of Japheth the coastland peoples came
Of the Gentiles they were separated each into their land
Everyone according to his language and his family name
Everyone into their nations directed by the Divine hand

Japheth's name has grown great, especially in one way
His line became the steward of the Messiah's name
Bearing His banner and waiting for the day
When the sons of Shem will once again do the same

The time is coming full when Shem's tents will finally
Finish encompassing Japheth's bearing of the sword
And to Shem the world's attention will be directed, you see
Because to Shem will return Jesus, God's living Word

Everything in due time and as directed by the unseen Hand
And when Jesus returns His Rest will be gloriously grand

Hallelujah and Amen...