

Genesis 10:1-32
The Descendants of Noah

I grew up in Rock Hill, a small town in South Carolina

- The total population of the city is around 50,000 people

I attended Bible college in Wake Forest, North Carolina

- But it was in a small town as well

When Sarah and I moved to California for me to attend seminary, it was an eye-opener

- I had never seen so many different cultures in one place
- I was used to a city of 50,000
- Los Angeles alone had 4 million people
 - o *That is 80 times the amount of people in Rock Hill!*

Going to Wal-Mart was a cross-cultural experience

- I was hearing languages that I had never heard before

As I began classes at The Master's Seminary, one of the first things that struck me was the different people from all over the world

- USA
- Canada
- South America
- Asia
- Europe
- Russia
- Australia
- New Zealand
- And many other countries

Being at The Master's Seminary was a blessing in so many ways

- But one of the blessings was making friends with men all over the world
- Men who were unlike me in language, appearance, and culture

I began to realize that although I had many differences with many men at the Seminary, I had many things in common

- We loved the Lord Jesus Christ
- We wanted to be equipped for a lifetime of pastoral ministry
- Just to name two

You know, after about the second or third year, I didn't notice the different accents and cultural differences

- I began seeing these men in a different light
- These were my fellow brothers in Christ
- They were my co-laborers together for Christ

Have you ever had an experience like that?

- Living here in Houston is much like the atmosphere in Los Angeles

Especially if you didn't grow up in Houston, you may have had a similar culture shock when you moved here

- You may feel like you are out of place
- You may feel like you can't relate to other people with different backgrounds

This morning, I want us to look at Genesis 10 together before we celebrate the Lord's Table

- I will admit up front that this chapter may not rank high on your list of passages to study
- Frankly, some of us may confess that we don't see much worthy of study in this chapter
- Some expositors have even skipped over this chapter entirely when preaching through Genesis

The Bible says that **"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness"** (2 Tim 3:16)

- Genesis 10 definitely falls under the umbrella of **"all Scripture"**

God intended for us to study this passage

- And we plan on doing that this morning

If you rewind the tape of history a few thousand years, you may ask yourself, "Where did all of our different cultures come from? Why are we so different?"

- Actually, the passage before us this morning helps us to answer that question
- More important than understanding what makes us different is understanding what makes us alike

Let's read Genesis 10:1-32

The author of Genesis walks us through a genealogy of the descendants of Noah's three sons **so that** we can understand our common heritage that we have under God

Last week we learned that Noah died (9:29)

- But history continues

God is not limited by the "big names" of the Bible

- Noah
- Abraham
- Moses

God uses men – both great and small – to accomplish His purpose

- Noah was a faithful, obedient man
- However, he was not sinless

Noah's three sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth – will continue the legacy of humanity

- It will be through them that the population of the Earth is recreated

The tenth chapter of Genesis has been called "The Table of Nations"

- It is unsurpassed in terms of a genealogical link between families before the Flood and families after the Flood
- Even unbelieving historians agree that this is one of the most precious pieces of genealogical history that mankind has¹

Aside from an opening and closing statement, this Table of Nations presents the descendants of Noah's three sons

- Sons of Japheth
- Sons of Ham
- Sons of Shem

¹ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 245.

This Table is not so much concerned with a listing of the sons of the ancestors

- The table is concerned with what became of these sons²

Since Shem would be the son through which the Deliverer Seed would come, it makes sense that he would be the compiler and editor of this family tree

- Since these three brothers and their descendants were separated geographically, there was some loss of contact and information
- Hence, this Table is not a complete tracing of every person in these families
- The list is very selective at times³

Let's look at the opening statement in verse one, "**Now these are *the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood***" (10:1)

This is now the fourth use of the Hebrew word *toledot*

- It is one of the mile-markers in the book of Genesis that allows us to see the author tracing the hope of the Deliverer Seed
- The use of this word marks a new chapter – a new section – in the book of Genesis

It is no surprise that Moses begins this history with Noah's three sons

- Besides Noah, they would have been the only men to have lived both before and after the Flood
- They have provided a very important link between these two epochs of time

The mention of "**sons were born to them after the flood**" gives a sense of perspective on this genealogical link. Up to this point, these three sons have listed in a particular order

- Shem, Ham, Japheth (5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1)

But as we will see in this tenth chapter, Moses arranges them in a different order

- Japheth
- Ham
- Shem

There is a very clear answer as to why Moses switched the order of these names

- As you know, the hope of a Deliverer was still in the hearts of those who belonged to God
- They longed for God to rescue and deliver them from the tyranny of sinful man

God's promise back in Genesis 3 was still alive

- God would be faithful to provide a Deliverer
 - o *But He would come in God's timing*

Throughout Genesis, the chosen line would be detailed last

- Hence, when Moses set out to list this Table of Nations, he puts Shem in last place as the elect seed⁴

You also remember from last week that Ham had acted inappropriately toward his father Noah

- Because of this, Noah cursed Ham
- Noah asked that God cause Ham's descendants to be in perpetual servitude toward his brothers

² Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 225.

³ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

⁴ Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Genesis 1-11:26*, 440.

Since there were only three brothers, this meant that the lineage of Canaan would be in servitude toward the descendants of Japheth and Shem

- History bears this out on many occasions

The bulk of the rest of this chapter traces the descendants of Noah's three sons

- Not every person is traced equally⁵
- As a matter of fact, no daughters are even mentioned in this chapter!

What we have is a listing of seventy (70) descendants

- 14 associated with Japheth
- 30 associated with Ham
- 26 associated with Shem⁶

Most of these people are selected because they are founders of various tribes

- These tribes will spread out over the face of the Earth and begin to adopt different languages and cultures

The apostle Paul tells those in Athens that God “made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26)

- This is one of the main purposes of this chapter
 - o To show that we are all of the same stock – Noah⁷

Here we are several thousand years after the events of this chapter

- It is nearly impossible to identify every name and tribe in this chapter
- People groups have blended, some have died off, and others have changed names
- This is the fascinating aspect of world history

I. Sons of Japheth (10:2-5)

As you may have noticed, only four verses are dedicated to the study of Japheth's line

- This is due, in large part, to the fact that this group of people settled the longest distance away from the children of Israel⁸
- Hence, they would have been the least involved with Israel and her history

It is thought that the lineage of Japheth were the founders of many of the Indo-European nations

- These nations eventually moved into Europe, Asia, and India
- Some even speculate that the ancestors of Japheth migrated into North and South America⁹

We will mention a few of the names given in 10:2-5

- **Gomer** – those who inhabited Eastern Europe
- **Magog** – this is a future enemy of Israel as described in Ezekiel 28; this is probably Russia and its northern neighbors
- **Madai** – also known as the Medes, this people group is spoken of in reference to the Medo-Persian Empire in the book of Daniel – this would be modern-day Iran
- **Javan** – this is the original founder of the Greeks

⁵ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 104-05.

⁶ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 102.

⁷ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 135.

⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Genesis 1-15*, 219.

⁹ Message by Rick Kress on Genesis 10. He has some very helpful comments on this chapter of God's Word.

- **Ashkenaz** is one of the sons of Gomer – Jews in Germany have been called the Ashkenazi Jews, probably tracing their heritage back to this son of Gomer¹⁰
- **Tarshish** is one of the sons of Javan – we are familiar with Tarshish from the book of Jonah. God told Jonah to go to Ninevah; however, Jonah headed toward Tarshish

Genesis 10:5 lets us know that the Tower of Babel in chapter 11 actually precedes chapter 10's genealogy¹¹

- “From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations”
- The reason why they were scattered across the world will be discussed in next week's lesson on chapter 11

But we do see that the sons of Japheth were seafaring individuals¹²

- They would have traveled far and wide away from the land of Israel
- Besides, his dad had constructed the Ark!!

II. Sons of Ham (10:6-20)

We have already seen in chapter nine how one son of Ham – Canaan – has been cursed by Noah

- It was Noah's desire that Canaan – and all his descendants – live in a continual state of servitude to his relatives

The lineage of Ham is given much more attention and detail than Japheth because the descendants of Ham lived in closer proximity to the children of Israel

- They were more well-known since they were oftentimes neighbors or enemies of Israel¹³

As we did with the lineage of Japheth, we will cover a few, selected names in this genealogy

- **Cush** – this is oftentimes associated with the people in modern-day Ethiopia
- **Sheba** – we know from the OT that the queen of this area visited Solomon during his reign, asking his counsel and seeking out his wisdom
- **Mizraim** – this is the Hebrew term for Egypt. The people from Upper and Lower Egypt come from this son
- **Put** – the peoples of Libya in northwestern Africa owe their lineage to this man
- **Canaan** – this is the son who was cursed by Noah. The children of Canaan – the Canaanites – were the original inhabitants of Israel, oftentimes called “the land of Canaan”
- **The children of Mizraim** – you will notice that all of their names end in “im” which is the Hebrew way of denoting a people group instead of an individual. Most likely these people inhabited North Africa. It would from these people groups that the Philistines would come.
- **Sidon** – Canaan's firstborn evidently founded the city of Phoenicia in modern-day Lebanon
- **Heth** – this people group was the first known settlers in Israel, living alongside the Canaanites

The territory of the Canaanite people is recorded due to the fact that they were such close neighbors with Israel

- The reference to “**Sodom and Gomorrah**” (10:19) will factor greatly into the coming chapters of Genesis

Out of this myriad of people, one stands out in particular – Nimrod (10:8-11)

- He is remembered for his “**personal prowess and political power**”¹⁴

¹⁰ Morris, 247.

¹¹ Mathews, 428.

¹² Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 1-17*, 334.

¹³ Davis, 140.

¹⁴ Kidner, 107.

God Himself remarks on how great he had become

- But he was the icon of rebellion and independence from God
- His very name means “to rebel”¹⁵
- He was a very dominant individual during his day, using manipulation and a domineering attitude to cause his kingdom to progress
- He is the prototype of rebellion

Nimrod founded a large empire which included Babel

- This would later be referred to as Babylon
- Throughout Scripture, Babylon stands for everything that is godless – everything that is in opposition to God¹⁶

The same unbridled lust for power that manifested itself in chapter six resurfaces in the person of Nimrod

- A proverb was even named after him – as we see in verse nine, “**Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD**”

He had a part in starting the Assyrian Empire

- The city that is well-known to us is Ninevah
- The prophets Jonah and Nahum both deal with this city

God’s common grace was being extended to this man

- However, he rebelled against God, deciding to live independently from God his Creator

III. Sons of Shem (10:21-31)

It would be through the line of Shem that the Messiah would come

- The Deliverer Seed would come through the line of Shem

In Genesis, the nonelect lines are always dealt with first

- The chosen lineage is last so that it can be explained in detail and so that it can be a transition to the next descendant

The tracing of the lineage of Shem will consume the rest of Genesis

- We will continue to trace the offspring, one generation at a time

Let’s consider some of the people in this chapter

- **Eber**, the son of Shelah, the son of Arphachshad, the son of Shem is commonly associated with the name Hebrew, thus indicating the title of the Jewish race. We will see in chapter 11 that he was a forefather of Abraham
- **Asshur** – the sons of Shem who is associated with the city of Assyria. It is thought that Nimrod, the son of Ham, developed this area as part of his empire
- **Arpachshad** – he is the line through which the Promised Seed would come. This is why his line is given so much attention.
- **Aram** – it is thought that he would be the father of the Arameans. The Aramaic language originates in this people group – it is very close to the Hebrew language.
- **Uz** – this should be familiar since Job lived in the land of “**Uz**” (Job 1:1)
- **Peleg** – this person’s name closely resembles the Hebrew word “divided.” It is thought that Peleg was named for a momentous event that took place on Earth. It could be that he was named after the events

¹⁵ Hamilton, 338.

¹⁶ Griffith-Thomas, 103.

associated with the Tower of Babel wherein the Earth was “divided” according to language and geographical boundaries. It would be through this line that the Messiah would come. But we will have to wait until chapter 11 to discuss that.

- **Joktan** – he is the brother of Peleg
- **Ophir** – this is a place, not a person, that was well known for its gold throughout the OT

Concluding statement, “**These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood**” (10:32)

Geographically speaking, this Table has covered quite a scope of the world¹⁷

- East to Persia
- South to Ethiopia
- North to Anatolia
- West to Crete

As we have already stated, God is showing us through this chapter that all of humanity has come from a common stock

- This emphasizes the brotherhood of humanity

God is concerned for all peoples of all nations

- He is the Creator of all peoples
- In this essence, He is their Father

But the nations as a whole have rejected God as their Creator

- They have adopted other philosophies and religious theories that explain away the truth of God’s Word

The sad reality is that the Jews were to be a light to the entire world – all of these nations – of God’s redemption

- They were given the knowledge of the One and True God
- They were to be God’s missionaries to tell the nations – the Gentiles – about Himself

However, they sinned by forgetting this

- Instead of proclaiming the message of redemption, they either kept silent about it or they added their own regulations to God’s Word¹⁸

In a similar fashion, the Church is not tied to one particular cultural group

- Rather, the Church consists of a spiritual culture and heritage
- Christ has commanded us to take the Gospel to all the world – every single nation

This is why I appreciate the work of organizations such as New Tribes Mission that take the Gospel to people groups who have never heard the Gospel before

- This also applies to those organizations that are translating the Scriptures into new languages

¹⁷ Hamilton, 346.

¹⁸ Griffith-Thomas, 103.

What can we learn from this chapter?¹⁹

- All nations are of one blood – that of Noah
 - o We are related to one another

- All nations have one need – that of redemption
 - o The fundamental problem with mankind is sin
 - o The greatest need, therefore, is forgiveness of sin
 - o Forgiveness can only come through redemption

- All nations have one way of salvation – that is Jesus Christ
 - o All roads do not lead to heaven
 - o There are many different religions in the world; however, they don't all lead to heaven
 - o There is only one Way to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ

There is a fascinating scene in heaven that is described in Revelation 5

- Let's turn there as we prepare for the Lord's Table

The apostle sees a book that is sealed

- The problem is that no one is worthy to open and break its seals
- John begins to weep but an elder tells him that there is One who is worthy to open the book and break its seals

“And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And He came, and He took *it* out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ And Thou hast made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth’” (5:6-10)

Jesus Christ is this Lamb who is worthy to take the book and break its seals

- This new song highlights the worthiness of Jesus Christ
- He – Christ – purchased for God with His own blood men, women, and children “**from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**”

What a global God we serve

- I am so grateful for my time in Los Angeles
- I am grateful to be in a town like Houston

Because it reminds me of how cross-cultural heaven will be like

- We will worship God with believers from all over the world

Sure, we have our differences

- But we have one very important thing in common
- We love the Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁹ Griffith-Thomas, s104-06.

We have studied this Table of Nations this morning

- We see that if we trace the family tree back far enough, we are all connected to the same base

We are all sons of Noah

- More to the point, we are all sons of Adam

When Adam sinned, that spiritual rebellion and separation was passed on to his children

- It was then passed on to his children
- All the way down to us today

Yes, you and I are still bearing the consequences of one man's sin

- But Jesus Christ came so that we might have forgiveness and new life

God promised Satan, **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."** (3:15)

If we fastforward the tape a few thousand years, we see the fulfillment of the promise given in Genesis 3:15

- Jesus Christ is the unique God-Man
- He is the seed of woman who didn't come about through a human male
- Therefore, He is especially qualified in dealing with Satan

There are only two ways to live²⁰

- Our way
 - o Reject God and try to run your own life
 - o The result will be condemnation, death, and judgment
- God's new way
 - o You submit to God as Ruler, relying and trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection
 - o The result is forgiveness and eternal life

This morning as we celebrate the Lord's Table, I would encourage you to examine your lives

- Perhaps you are here and realize that you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- You are fully aware that your sins have never been forgiven

If that describes you, I would ask that you turn your bulletin over to the back and prayerfully read those verses

- They will explain to you
 - o The character of God
 - o The condition of your soul
 - o The consequences of your sin
 - o The plan of salvation

If you are here as a believer, perhaps you realize that you have sinful habits and patterns in your life that are not pleasing to God

- It is easy to compare our lives with others, deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are better than others
- But we are to compare our lives to God Who is utterly perfect, sinless, and holy

²⁰ <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/box6.asp>