

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Genealogy of the Nations”

Genesis 10:1-32

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Introduction

Chapter 10 of Genesis has been called the Table of Nations. It is also one of those texts that we tend to want to skip over in our Bible reading.

But there are a number of reasons for giving this text careful consideration:

1. It provides us authoritative evidence that the post-flood world descended from one pair of human beings.
2. It provides us with a historical accounting of the origins of the nations of the world and how they spread over the face of the earth.

Dr. William F. Albright, the world’s leading authority on the archeology of the Near East, said, “The tenth chapter of Genesis . . . stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework . . . The Table of Nations remains an astonishing accurate document.”

3. It provides us with an understanding of the relationship between the people of Israel and all other nations and peoples of the world.
4. It provides us with the knowledge of who we are and where we came from.
"One must consider this chapter of Genesis a mirror in which to discern that 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 . . . 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." (Luther)
5. It provides us the primitive branches of the genealogical tree of mankind that will eventually culminate in the objective of every biblical genealogy – the person of Jesus Christ.
6. It provides us with a variety of life lessons that we can apply to our lives today.

I The Japhethites

This division of the chapter, centering on Japheth, is the shortest and highlights 14 of Japheth’s descendants.

The Japhethites split into two groups. One group settled in India and the other group in Europe. Together they form what is known as the "Indo-European" family of nations.

The Greeks say that their ancestor was a man named Japetos, who most ethnologists believe to be Japheth. The Indians, on the other hand, have an account of the flood similar in many respects to the Biblical account. The name of their hero is not Noah, but Satyaurata, and he had three sons. The name of the oldest was Iyapeti (you can see Japheth in that, very easily), and the other two were Sharma, and C'harma (Shem and Ham). The interesting thing about the Indian account is that C'harma was cursed by his father because he laughed at him when he got drunk, a very clear echo of the story we have in Genesis.

A. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras
[Verse 1-2]

1. Gomer: From Gomer come the Germanic peoples, from whom come most of the original peoples of Western Europe: the original French, Spanish, and Celtic settlers. From these come most of the early families of Western Europe and, consequently, of the Americas as well.
2. Three of Japheth's sons, Magog (modern-day Georgia near the Black Sea - *Ezekiel 38:2, 6; 39:1-2*), Tubal (modern Tobolsk), and Meshech (Ancient city of Moskovi – Modern-day Moscow), settled in the far north of Europe and became the Russian peoples.
3. Madai: From Madai come the ancient Medes of the famous Persian Empire. They populated what is now known as Iran and Iraq. The peoples of India also came from this branch of Japheth's family.
4. Javan: Javan is unquestionably the ancestor of the Greeks. His name is still found in Greece in the form of Ionia. The Ionic Sea and Ionian Peninsula all derive from this word Javan.

B. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Tagarmah [Verse 3]

1. Ashkenaz: 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 was called Ascenia, and which later became known as the Islands of Scandia, which we now know as Scandinavia. It is possible that some from this clan also settled in Germany since German Jews are still referred to as the "Ashkenazi."
2. Riphath: Although we do not know too much about Riphath, we do know that his descendents migrated to Central Europe, and some scholars feel that the word, Europe, itself may come from this name, Riphath.

3. Togarmah: Togarmah was the ancestor of the present-day Turks and Armenians, who also migrated northward into Southern Germany.

C. The sons of Javan [Verse 4-5]

From Javan (Ezek. 27:13, 19) come the ancient Greeks, whose sea-faring ways are described in verse 5.

1. Elishah: Sicily and Southern Italy – Ez 27:7

2. Tarshish: Probably Southern Spain – Ps 48:7; 72:10; Is 60:9; 66:19; Ez 27:12; 38:13; Jonah 1:3

3. Kittim: Cyprus – an island at the east end of the Mediterranean sea, south of Turkey.

4. Rodanim: Rhodes -- a large Greek island on the Aegean sea.

5. Tiras: Gave rise to the Etruscans of Italy

a. Their territories: Defining geographical boundaries

b. Their clans: Defining ethnic groupings

c. Their nations: Defining political affiliations

d. Their languages: Defining linguistic development

II The Hamites

A. The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan [Verse 6]

Ham was the forefather of those who made up great cities and empires, including Babylon, Assyria, Ninevah, and Egypt. From Ham came 30 descendants listed here in Genesis 10 who populated Africa and the Far East.

1. Cush: Cush is associated with the peoples of Southern Arabia and Ethiopia. Ethiopians still trace their ancestry back to Cush.

2. Mizraim: Mizraim in Hebrew was the ancient name for Egypt. Mizraim became the father of the Egyptian Empire, settling in the Nile Valley.

3. Put: Put is associated with Libya, in the region of North Africa west of Egypt.

4. Canaan: From Canaan come those nations, which made up those known generally as the Canaanites. The word “Canaan” means “Land of purple” because it was a producer and exporter of a highly valued purple dye. Canaan centered largely in and around Palestine, the land we today think of as Israel.

B. The sons of Cush [Verse 7a]

C. The sons of Raamah [Verse 7b]

D. Nimrod [Verse 8-12]

The account suddenly focuses on an individual named Nimrod which means, “Let us rebel.” It is possible that Cush named him with the intent to raise him up to be a leader in a planned and organized rebellion against God. Rather than being a servant to his brothers, as Noah prophesied, he would establish himself as Lord over his brothers.

In the Babylonian religion, Nimrod, also referred to as Marduk, became the founder of a great religious system later to become known as the Babylonian system – Mystery Babylon referred to in Rev 17:5. His mother, Semiramis, was later to be called the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:17-25) and was worshipped. She claimed that Nimrod’s birth was a virgin birth. You can see in this a clever attempt on the part of Satan to anticipate the genuine virgin birth and to counterfeit God’s intended work in Jesus Christ.

One day while Nimrod was hunting wild boar, a boar gored him and he died in a field. As the myth goes, three days later his life returned. So the people began to celebrate his resurrection by coloring eggs and having great festivities in the springtime of the year. The celebration was called Ashtar, which is another name for Semiramis, and eventually became Easter.

It is also interesting to note that Nimrod’s date of birth was December 25.

They celebrated his birth with gift giving, drunken orgies, cutting trees and decorating them with silver and gold in their homes. It is a bit shocking to realize how much our culture has been affected by this idolatrous cult.

1. A mighty warrior on the earth

"This is not talking about Nimrod’s ability to hunt wild game. He was not a hunter of animals. He was a hunter of men - a warrior. The Jewish Talmud tells us that he was "a hunter of the souls of men." It was through his ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom of the Euphrates valley city states was consolidated." (Boice)

2. A mighty hunter before the Lord

Should be translated, “He was a mighty tyrant in the face of the Lord.”

A Jerusalem Targum says: "He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, ‘Depart from the judgment of the Lord, and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!’ Therefore it is said: ‘As Nimrod the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord.’”

Chaldee inscription: “Cush begat Nimrod who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against Jehovah”

Application: 1 Peter 5:8-9 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

3. An architect and builder of great cities

He was the founder of both Babylon and Nineveh, the two great cities of antiquity, which ultimately became enemies of Israel.

Ginzberg quotes from a Jewish legend: "The great success that attended all of Nimrod's undertakings produced a sinister effect. Men no longer trusted in God, but rather in their own prowess and ability, an attitude to which Nimrod tried to convert the whole world."

By the way, this is the same strategy that will be used by the anti-Christ to sway the world to rebel against the Messiah.

Application:

In contrast to Nimrod's rebellious attempt to build his own kingdom, we know that Abraham was a man of faith “who was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” Heb 11:10

a. In Shinar: Lower Mesopotamia

The land of Shinar, mentioned here, is also the land of Shunar or Shumar, from which we get the word, Sumeria, and the Sumerian civilization.

1. Babylon

Nimrod inspired people to build the city of Babylon and erected the tower of Babel, which was a celestial observatory, which gave birth to the occultic and forbidden practice of astrology.

2. Erech, Akkad, Calneh

The city of Erech was the legendary city of Gilgamesh, the hero of the Babylonian flood epic that many of us read in High School.

b. In Assyria:

1. Nineveh

The prophet Jonah was sent to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2) to warn the people of God's impending judgment because of their oppression, cruelty, idolatry, and wickedness.

Although they repented for a time, they eventually returned to their rebellious ways and as a result, God sent the prophet Nahum to announce God's final judgment for their wickedness.

Nahum 1:3 “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.”

2. Rehoboth Ir, Calah, Resen

The city of Resen was founded by people who later migrated into the north of Italy and began the great Etruscan Empire. This same clan also populated the countries of North Africa.

E. The sons of Mizraim [Verse 13-14]

Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, the Anamites, the Lehabites, the Termites, the Megabites, the Uptights and the Out-a-sights.

F. The sons of Canaan [Verse 15-20]

1. Sidon is mentioned as the first-born of Canaan. He founded the city by the same name, located near Tyre, on the coast of Phoenicia.

2. Heth (Gen. 23 cf. Gen. 26:34-35 and 27:46) is the father of the Hittite nation. The Hittites were once regarded by archaeologists as purely mythical. But recently, Hittite relics have been discovered in abundance, and scholars are now well aware of the great civilization that flourished under the Hittites. The Hebrew form of this word, Hittite, is Khettai and from this comes the word Cathay, which is the ancient name for China. Certain of the Hittites migrated eastward and settled in China. Also, another name in this list, the Sinites, is linked with China. It derives from a presumed son of Canaan whose name was Sin. The Sinites migrated eastward until they came into Western China, where they founded the ancient Empire of China and gave their name to the land. There is a direct connection between the word China and the word Sinim, the biblical name for China.

In fact to this day, we use words with the root “Sin” to describe the Chinese people: For example Sinology is the study of the Chinese people and culture.

Some of the Sinites pushed eastward and toward the north over the land bridge into Alaska. The Sinites are the people who settled the Americas in prehistoric days and became the ancestors of the Eskimos and Indians who, to this very day, betray their Mongoloid ancestry.

1. Clans
2. Languages
3. Territories
4. Nations

III The Semites

Shem and 26 of his descendants are mentioned last because he is the principle person of the chapter.

It is from the line of Shem that Abraham would come. It is from the line of Abraham that David would come. And it is from the line of David that the Messiah would come – Matt. 1:1.

- A. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram [Verse 21-22]
1. Elam was an ancestor to the Persian peoples
 2. Asshur was the founder of the Assyrians
 3. Arphaxad was the ancestor to Abram and the Hebrews – Gen 11:10-13, 27
Arphaxad was the grandfather of Eber whose descendants were later referred to as “Hebrews” - Joshua 24:2-3, 14-15
 4. Lud (Ezek. 27:10) was father to the Lydians who lived for a time in Asia Minor
 5. Aram was father to the Arameans, who we also know as the Syrians.
- B. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, Meshech [Verse 23]
Uz was in the region of Arabia and later became the birthplace of Job (Job 1:1).
- C. The son of Arphaxad: Shelah [Verse 24]
- D. The sons of Eber [Verse 25-30]
The most prominent of Shem’s descendants is Eber, the father of Peleg (10:25), the forefather of Abram (cf. 11:14-26). From Eber comes the word Hebrew. Abraham, who was really the founder of the Hebrew nation, was six generations beyond Eber. Yet Eber is of such note that Abraham is identified as an Eberite, or Hebrew.
1. Peleg; “In his time the earth was divided.”
Possible interpretations of the earth being divided:
 - a. The Continental Drift theory
Originally there was a single land mass. But during the times of Peleg, this single land mass began to divide and separate into the seven major continents we know today.
 - b. The linguistic dispersion at the Tower of Babel
A reference to the confusion of tongues and subsequent geographical separation of the people of the earth following God’s judgment over the Tower of Babel.
 2. Joktan
The names of Joktan’s sons are all associated with various Arabic peoples.
The son named Jobab in verse 29 may be none other than the Job in the OT.

IV The Summary of Noah’s Genealogy

- A. These are the clans of Noah’s sons [Verse 31-32a]
1. According to their lines of descent
 2. Within their nations
- B. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood [Verse 32b]
Acts 17:24-27 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth ... From one man he made every nation of men, that they

should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.”

Conclusion

In closing, there are several things I would like to point out in terms of application:

1. Your life matters to God

He knows you by name and has divinely ordained the exact times and places where you should live. He has done this so that you might seek him and know His will for your life. (Acts 17:26-27)

2. You are writing history

Every day you live, the choices you make, the actions you take, and the things you say are becoming a part of history.

Eph 5:15-18 “Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

3. You are influencing the destiny of others

How you conduct yourself in your marriage, with your children, in your work, and in the community is incredibly important! You are leaving a legacy for those who will follow in your steps.

Prov 20:7 “The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.”

4. You are daily making deposits in your eternal future

Rom 2:6-11 “God will give to each person according to what he has done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking (like Nimrod) and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.”

Rev 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”

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