

CHAPTER 10

THEME: Sons of Japheth; sons of Ham; sons of Shem.

This is a chapter of genealogies, of families, which are the origin of the nations of the world. This chapter is far more important than the space I'm giving to it would indicate. If you are interested in ethnology and anthropology and the story of mankind on the earth, you may want a far deeper study than you will find here. H. S. Miller, who has his master's degree in ethnology, has charted the origin of the nations, using Genesis 10 as a basis for the threefold division of the human family, which is revealed in these three sons of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Ethnology makes it evident, by the way, that neither the sons of Japheth nor the sons of Ham ever comprised what some folk call the lost ten tribes of Israel.

Here in chapter 10 we have the genealogies of all three sons of Noah.

Let me give you a quotation from Saphir's book, *The Divine Unity of Scripture*:

The tenth chapter of Genesis is a very remarkable chapter. Before God leaves, as it were, the nations to themselves and begins to deal with Israel, His chosen people from Abraham downward, He takes a loving farewell of all the nations of the earth, as much as to say, "I am going to leave you for a while, but I love you. I have created you: I have ordered all your future; and their different genealogies are traced."

In chapter 10 seventy nations are listed. Fourteen of them are from Japheth. Thirty of them come from Ham. Don't forget that. It will give you a different conception of the black man at his beginning. And twenty-six nations come from Shem, making a total of seventy nations listed in this genealogy.

It seems to me that God is showing us what He has done with the nations of the world. Why has the white man in our day been so prominent? Well, I'll tell you why. Because at the beginning it was the black man, the colored races, that were prominent. Then the sons of Shem made a tremendous impact upon this world during the time of David and Solomon. And you will notice that from Shem there came others, such as the Syrians, the Lydians, and the Armenians, also the Arabians from Joktan. These great nations appeared next. Apparently we are currently in the period in which the white man has come to the front. It seems to me that all three are demonstrating that, regardless of whether they are a son of Ham or a son of Shem or a son of Japheth, they are incapable of ruling this world. I believe that God is demonstrating this to us, and to see this is a tremendous thing. - McGee

Gen 10:1 Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

First we see the genealogy of Japheth (vv. [Gen 10:2-5](#)), then the genealogy of Ham (vv. [Gen 10:6-20](#))—this was the outstanding people at the very beginning—and finally the genealogy of Shem (vv. [Gen 10:21-32](#)). Notice that throughout the Bible God follows this same pattern of giving the rejected line first and saying a word about it, then He drops that subject entirely and does not bring it up again. Finally, He gives the accepted line, the line which is leading to the Lord Jesus Christ. – McGee

Gen 10:2 The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

Japheth: The Japhetic peoples—the Medes, Greeks, Cypriots, etc. Probably the Caucasian people of Europe and of northern Asia. Many scholars would also include the Orientals here. -BBC

According to H. S. Miller's chart, the Scythians, the Slavs, Russians, Bulgarians, Bohemians, Poles, Slovaks, Croatians came from Magog. The Indians and the Iranic races—Medes, Persians, Afghans, Kurds—all came from Madai. From Javan we have the Greeks, Romans, and the Romance nationalities such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, etc. Coming from Tiras are the Thracians, the Teutons, the Germans, and then from that we have the east Germanic and the

European races, the north Germanic or the Scandinavians and the west Germanic, from which come the High German and the Low German, and then the Angles and the Saxons and the Jutes, the Anglo–Saxon race, the English people.

Well, I simply can't go into the whole chart, but it is an interesting study. You can see that the majority of us in America descended from these lines.

Gen 10:3-5 *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.*

Verse 5 describes the division of the Japhetic tribes into their different areas.

Gen 10:6 *The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.*

Ham: The Hamitic peoples—Ethiopians, Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, possibly the African and Oriental peoples, though many scholars view the Orientals as Japhetic. - BBC

As you can see, Ham had other sons, but the curse was only upon Canaan. Why it was not upon the others, I am not prepared to say. From Canaan came the Phoenicians, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, etc.

From Ham's son Cush came the Africans—the Ethiopians, the Egyptians, the Libyans, etc. All of these races are Hamitic, you see. Now we have some detail regarding a son of Cush—McGee

Gen 10:7-9 *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."*

Nimrod (vv. 8-10) means rebel. He appears as the first "mighty one on the earth" after the flood (v. 8) and as the first to establish a kingdom (v. 10). He built Babel (Babylon) in rebellion against God, and also Nineveh in Assyria (see v. 11), another inveterate enemy of God's people. - BBC

"He began to be a mighty one in the earth." He wanted to become the ruler of a great world empire, and he attempted to do it.

"He was a mighty hunter before the LORD." This doesn't mean that he was a wild game hunter. Sometimes a little boy is given an air gun, and when he goes out and shoots a sparrow, his folks say, "My, look at that! He's a little Nimrod. He hit a sparrow!" But Nimrod wasn't shooting sparrows or hunting wild game in Africa. He was a hunter of men's souls—that is the thought in this passage.

Gen 10:10 *And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

He was the founder of those great cities in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod has quite a story which you can get from secular history. Alexander Hislop, in his book, *The Two Babylons*, gives the background which I am not going to repeat here, but it is a fascinating story of how Nimrod was responsible for the Tower of Babel. It was he who attempted to bring together the human race after the Flood in an effort to get them united into a nation of which he could become the great world ruler. He was the rebel, the founder of Babel, the hunter of the souls of men. He was the lawless one, and he is a shadow or a type of the last world ruler, the Antichrist who is yet to appear.

The first great civilization, therefore, came out from the sons of Ham. We need to recognize that. It is so easy today to fall into the old patterns that we were taught in school a few years ago. Now the black man is wanting more study of his race. I don't blame him. He hasn't been given an opportunity in the past several hundred years. The story of the beginning of the black man is that he headed up the first two great civilizations that appeared on this earth. They were from the sons of Ham. Nimrod was a son of Ham.

I'm not going to attempt to develop that line any further. You see, we are following the pattern set by the Holy Spirit in which He gives the rejected line first and then drops it. We are going to turn now to the line that will lead to Abraham and then to the nation Israel and finally to the coming of Christ into this world. It is this line which we will follow through the Old Testament. God is bidding good-bye to the rest of humanity for the time being, but He will be coming back to them later on.

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Gen 10:11-20 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). 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.

Gen 10:21 - 25 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.

As already mentioned, verse 21 lists Shem as the older brother of Japheth. It is impossible to identify with certainty the places where the various people settled, but the following will prove helpful in later studies.

Tarshish (v. 4)—Spain
Kittim (v. 4)—Cyprus
Cush (v. 6)—Ethiopia
Mizraim (v. 6)—Egypt
Put or Phut (v. 6)—Libya
Canaan (v. 6)—Palestine
Asshur (v. 11, KJV)—Assyria
Elam (v. 22)—Persia
Aram (v. 22)—Syria and Mesopotamia

Verse 25 tells us that the division of the earth (at Babel) took place in the days of **Peleg**.

Gen 10:26-31 *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.*

Gen 10:32 *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.*

Verse 32 serves as an introduction to the Tower of Babel in chapter 11, when the families of the sons of Noah were divided into different nations with different languages. _BBC

CHAPTER 11

THEME: The building of the Tower of Babel; from Shem to Abraham.

THE BUILDING OF THE TOWER OF BABEL

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech [Gen_11:1].

I do not know what language the people spoke at that time. A friend of mine who was a fellow Texan, a preacher in Texas, facetiously said to me, “You and I are probably the only two who really know what they spoke before the Tower of Babel because it was Texan.” Well, I’ll be honest with you, I’ve come to the conclusion that it could have been something else. What the language was, we simply do not know. I believe whatever that language was will be the language that will be spoken in heaven, and it will be a much better language than we have today, with more specific nouns and verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there [Gen_11:2].

“As they journeyed from the east”—notice it was from the east. Mankind was apparently moving toward the west.

“They found a plain in the land of Shinar,” which is in the Tigris–Euphrates Valley.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar [Gen_11:3].

Down in that area there is no stone, and so they made bricks. That in itself reveals something about the substantial character of their buildings. Even today brick is a popular type of building material. Yet the brick was used there because of its practicality; it was a necessity.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth [Gen_11:4].

Notice that they said, “Let us build us a city ... and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad.” They had a bad case of perpendicular I–itis—let us make us a name! In my opinion, the sole purpose of this tower was for a rallying place for man.

The Tower of Babel was a ziggurat. There are many ruins of ziggurats in the Tigris–Euphrates Valley. I have a picture of the ruins of one in Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham lived. It was made of brick, solidly constructed, and around it was a runway which went to the top. Apparently, on top of it was an altar on which, in certain instances, human sacrifices were offered. Later on children were offered, put in a red–hot idol. All of this was connected with the ziggurat in later history.

But at the time of its construction, the Tower of Babel represented the rebellion of mankind against Almighty God. Apparently it was Nimrod who led in this movement. He was the builder of the city of Babel and evidently of the Tower of Babel also. It was to be a place for him to rear a world empire that was in opposition to God.

In order to realize his ambition and to make his dreams come true, two features and factors were essential: First, he needed a center of unity, a sort of headquarters, as it were. He needed a capital, a place to assemble, a place to look to. This was why he built the city of Babel. It fulfilled one of his requirements to carry out his dream of world empire. Secondly, he needed a rallying point, not just geographical but psychological, that which gives motive—a spark, an inspiration, a song, a battle cry, sort of like a “rally-around-the-flag-boys.” There had to be some impelling and compelling motivation. There had to be a monument, Lenin's tomb is where Communism meets, and in Nimrod's day it was the Tower of Babel. “Let us make us” is defiance and rebellion against God. “Let us make us a name” reveals an overweening ambition.

Now let's see what the Tower of Babel was not. It was not built as a place of refuge in time of high water. He wasn't building above the flood stage, as some expositors suggest. In fact, I consider that a very puerile interpretation. After all, Lenin's tomb is not a place of refuge when the Volga River overflows! No, this tower revealed the arrogant, defiant, rebellious attitude of man against God. God had said to man that he should scatter over the earth and replenish the earth. But man in essence answered, “Nothing doing. We're not going to scatter; we are going to get together. We are through with You.” The Tower of Babel was against God.

Also, the Tower of Babel was a religious symbol. It was a ziggurat. All through that valley, as I have indicated, there are ruins of ziggurats. They were places where people worshiped the creature rather than the Creator. Some ziggurats were round, others were square, but all of them had runways leading to the top, and on the top the people carried on the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. After all, when they could see the sun, moon, and stars, they knew they were not going to have a flood, and they felt that God had been pretty mean to have sent the Flood.

Now notice God's reaction to the Tower of Babel—

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do [Gen_11:5-6].

This is a tremendous statement! Since all the people spoke one language, they didn't have the great language barrier. They could get together and pool their knowledge and resources—“and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” We find here that man has a fallen nature in spite of the Flood and that he is totally depraved. God cannot ignore this rebellion, for it is a rebellion against Him. God is going to put up a protective wall. He is going to throw up a barrier. This was necessary because man is such a very capable creature. He can go to the moon and he can fly in a jet plane. I still am amazed that I can sit in a jet plane, flying five miles high in the air and be served a delicious dinner. I just can't get over it, I'll be honest with you. It seems unbelievable. Man has done that, friend. Man is a very competent creature.

You can see what mankind would do with one language if they all came together against God.

So notice what God did—

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth [Gen_11:7-9].

Now man is scattered over the face of the earth. They were together in their rebellion, but now they can't understand one another. You know, a language barrier is a wall that is higher than the Wall of China. It is higher than the Berlin Wall and more effective. It is that which separates people, and it is stronger than any national border and any ocean.

There are a great many who say that languages developed gradually. But God said He confounded their language so that right then, while they were building, they suddenly couldn't understand each other. The building project came to a sudden halt, and folk moved away from Babel—they went in every direction.

This is a tremendous thing that took place. Here is a “speaking in tongues” when they couldn't understand each other. It is a miracle, a miracle of speaking and a miracle of hearing. They spoke different languages, and those who heard could not understand them.

Let me ask you a question: Was this a blessing in disguise, or was it a curse upon mankind? Well, for God's purposes it was a blessing. For man's development away from God, it was definitely a judgment. Down through the centuries mankind has been kept separate, and it has been a great hindrance to him. One thing that is happening today through the medium of radio and television and jet travel is that these walls are being broken down. They are tumbling down like the walls of Jericho. This is one reason that I believe God is coming down in judgment again.

Now let's put over against this tongues movement those events of the Day of Pentecost. That was another great tongues movement, and that time we find that the gospel was preached in all the languages that were understood by the people there. This was not speaking in an unknown tongue—that never was involved in the tongues movement to begin with. On the Day of Pentecost, God is giving His answer to the Tower of Babel. God is saying to mankind, “I have a gospel and a message for you, and I'm coming to you with the gospel in your own language.”

This is the thing that God has done, and today the Bible has gone out in more languages than any other book. It is still being translated into tongues and dialects and is being brought to literally hundreds of tribes throughout the world. The gospel is for all mankind, and the reason and the purpose for the talking in tongues was to let the human race know that God had answered the Tower of Babel. He had a redemption for man now. The mission has been accomplished. It is no longer necessary for man to try to work out his salvation. He can listen to God's message and turn to Him. The gospel is for you, whoever you are and whatever tongue you speak. It's for you. It's for all the nations of the world. We are told in the final book of the Bible that there will be gathered into His presence “... a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues ...” (Rev_7:9).

FROM SHEM TO ABRAHAM

Now we will take up the line of Shem since it is the line which will be followed throughout the Old Testament.

These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood [Gen_11:10].

Shem's genealogy is given in the following verses, then we read:

And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:

And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters [Gen_11:24-25].

You see that we are following the line of Terah. Why Terah? Notice the next verse:

And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran [Gen_11:26].

Now we are going to follow the line of Abram, whom we know as Abraham.

We're following the line of Shem, and we are actually going right through the Bible following this line. The Word of God will follow this line directly to the Cross of Christ. God has recorded all of this as preliminary. God now has demonstrated to man that he is in sin. In the incident of Cain and Abel, we find that Cain would not acknowledge that he was a sinner. In him we see a demonstration of the pride of life. At the Flood we see the sin of the flesh because the people then were

given over to the sins of the flesh. They were indulging in violence and their every thought and imagination was evil. They were blind to their need of God. They were deaf to His claim, dead to God, dead in trespasses and sins. God gave them an invitation through Noah. They spurned the invitation and remained in the sins of the flesh. Then, here at the Tower of Babel, we see the sin of the will, rebellion against God. That was the Tower of Babel.

Do you have your own little Tower of Babel which you have built? Are you in rebellion against God? Well, it is natural for human nature to be in rebellion against God.

Little Willie was being very cantankerous one evening. He was really cutting up, and his mother was having a great deal of trouble with him. Finally, she had to get him and put him in a corner—sat him down with his face to the wall and told him to sit there. She left him and went back to the living room with the rest of the family. After awhile she heard a noise in there, and she called to him, “Willie, are you standing up?” He said, “No, Mom, I’m sitting down, but I am standing up on the inside of me!”

Well, believe me, there are a lot of men and women in our day who are standing up on the inside of them, standing against God. They have built their own little Tower of Babel.

Now as we follow the line which is going to lead to Christ, here are the generations or the families of Terah—

Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there [Gen_11:27-31].

The name Haran means delay.

And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran [Gen_11:32].

This bit of history is given to let us know that we are going to follow Abraham, and his story will begin in the next chapter.

It is at this point that the Book of Genesis—and, for that matter, the Bible as a whole—takes a turn. There is a great Grand Canyon which goes right down through the Book of Genesis. The first eleven chapters are on one side, and the last thirty-nine chapters are on the other side. In the first eleven chapters we cover over 2,000 years, as long a period as the rest of the Bible put together. Contrast that 2,000 years with the 350 years from Genesis 12 through 50. In these first eleven chapters of Genesis we have seen the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. These are four great events which covered that long span of years.