

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/6/2000 Brad Brandt

Genesis 10 "Much More Than a Bunch of Names"*

Proposition: At first glance, Genesis 10 may seem like an irrelevant bunch of names. It's not. In Genesis 10, we learn two important insights about God's plan for this world.

I. God designed one race (1, 32).

A. It's called the *human* race.

B. It began with Noah.

II. God designed many nations (2-31).

A. There are the descendants of Japheth (2-5).

1. They include 14 nations.

2. They settled to the north and west of Israel.

B. There are the descendants of Ham (6-20).

1. They include 30 nations.

2. They settled in southwest Asia and northeast Africa.

C. There are the descendants of Shem (21-31).

1. They include 26 nations.

2. They settled in the Middle East.

Application: What lessons can we learn from Genesis 10?

1. Genesis 10 reminds us of our frailty.

· We are sinners by nature.

· We are sinners by choice.

2. Genesis 10 reminds us of God's faithfulness.

· God has a plan.

· God works through people to accomplish His plan.

The Bottom Line: In a world full of death, there's hope through the One who conquered death.

Take a look at Genesis 10. What do you see? Here's how it begins: "This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras."

What do you see? A bunch of names, yes, but is that all? Look closer.

Louis Agassiz knew the importance of looking closer. Agassiz was a Swiss born scientist who arrived in Boston in 1846 and accepted a teaching position at Harvard University. Agassiz was a genius in the study of fishes and fossils. He was equally noted for his skill as a teacher, as the following story illustrates. One of Agassiz's students who later became a professor of near equal popularity, Mr. Scudder, gave this account of Agassiz's method:

"It was more than fifteen years ago [from 1874] that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz.... He

asked me a few questions about my object in coming.... 'When do you wish to begin?' he asked.

'Now,' I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic, 'Very well!' he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimen in yellow alcohol.

'Take this fish,' said he, 'and look at it... By and by I will ask you what you have seen.' In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the Professor--who had, however, left the Museum....Half an hour passed--an hour--another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face--ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters' view--just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour I concluded that lunch was necessary; so, with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the Museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours.... Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it.... I pushed my finger down its throat to feel how sharp the teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows, until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me--I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the Professor returned.

'That is right,' said he: 'A pencil is one of the best of eyes. Well, what is it like?'

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal....

When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment: 'You have not looked very carefully... look again, look again!' And he left me to my misery.

I ventured to ask what I should do next.

'Oh, look at your fish!' he said.... And so for three long days he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. 'Look, look, look,' was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had--a lesson whose influence has extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the Professor has left to me, as he has left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part....

Agassiz's training in the method of observing facts and their orderly arrangement was ever accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them.

'Facts are stupid things,' he would say, 'until brought into connection with some general law.'

At the end of eight months, it was almost with reluctance that I left these friends and turned to insects; but what I had gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups."

So what do you see in Genesis 10? At first glance, Genesis 10 may seem like an irrelevant bunch of names. It's not. We must look closer, as we must every time we study God's Word. Not for *hidden* meanings, but for the clear, straightforward meaning of the text.

2 Timothy 3:16 says that *all* Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for us. Does that include Genesis 10? It sure does. One of our problems is that we don't want to invest the effort that's necessary for careful Bible study. We tend to gravitate to certain Bible verses we "like," and avoid passages that seem irrelevant to us.

But no portion of God's Word is irrelevant, including Genesis 10. But we must *look!*

When we look carefully at Genesis 10, what do we see? Genesis 10 teaches us about God. But what? This morning as we look at Genesis 10, we're going to learn two important insights about God's plan for this world.

I. God designed one race (1, 32).

Perhaps one of the most explosive issues of our time pertains to *race*. Racial tensions are deep around the world, and it's not getting any better. Is there hope? Yes! If we would take seriously Genesis 10.

In the world today sociologists suggest there are three to six major races (depending on particular classifications), more than 100 nations of significance, and over 3,000 tribal languages and dialects.

Henry Morris remarks, "The origin of races and nations is a mystery to most scientists, determined as they are to explain man and his culture in terms of evolutionary framework. There are numerous contradictory theories on these matters among anthropologists and ethnologists."

Answer this. According to the Bible, how many races are there? The answer is *one*, as Genesis 10 makes clear. The Bible never mentions race at all. A race, in evolutionary terminology, is a sub-species evolving into a new species, but there is no scientific proof for such a theory.

The Bible clearly teaches that God designed not *races*, but a *race*--one and only one race. It's called...

A. It's called the ***human*** race. And...

B. It began with Noah. The Bible teaches that every person living on the planet right now is a descendant of Noah. I am. You are. The Congo farmer is. The Australian aborigine is. We are all part of the human race, descendants of Noah, and ultimately descendants of the first man, Adam.

Genesis 10 records what's commonly been called "The Table of Nations." Notice verse 1, "This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood."

The text begins, "This is the account of" (or, "These are the generations of," in the KJV). The word occurs ten times in Genesis, at the beginning of each major section. We're given the "account" of the heavens and the earth (in 2:4-4:26), the "account" of Adam's line (5:1-6:8), the "account" of Noah (in 6:9-9:29), and now the "account" of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Last week our family spent some time vacationing on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. The Falls are breathtaking, but something else fascinated me. The people. While on the transit bus we saw a family from Japan and a young person from Israel. On the sidewalk we crossed paths with Indians, Asians, and South Americans. In our campgrounds, we were surrounded by French speaking individuals from Quebec. It was fascinating.

Why are there nations? Why are there different people groups? How did the earth populate itself? Genesis 10 tells us. It all started the day Noah got off the ark with his three sons. Genesis 10 provides the genealogical record of Noah's three sons.

The final verse of the chapter reiterates. Verse 32, "These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood."

So there's insight #1--God designed one race, the human race. Why then is there such diversity? That's insight #2...

II. God designed many nations (2-31).

Chronologically, chapter 10 actually follows the first nine verses of chapter 11. Why are there many nations? The answer is one word--*Babel*. The descendants of Noah built a tower to reach the heavens, make a name for themselves, and show their solidarity (11:4).

But God thwarted their efforts. He divided them. How? He caused them to start speaking different languages, the result being they scattered over all the earth (as we'll see next time).

What happened to those people? Genesis 10 answers that question. Genesis 10 informs us that the reason there are many nations today is because of the activity of God.

Nothing happens by chance in this world, but by divine design. Ponder Acts 17:26, "From one man he [God] made every nation of men [note that God made the nations, and here's why...], that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."

Did you catch that? God made the nations. God determined set times for the nations (that's why some nations come and go). And God even determined the exact places nations should live. Wow! God certainly is sovereign and wise, isn't He?

It was His plan that there would be many nations, and that the many nations would originate from the three sons of Noah. Genesis 10 explains. First...

A. There are the descendants of Japheth (2-5). The text records, "The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah. 4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim. 5 (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)"

According to verse 2, Japheth had seven "sons." The term *son* can mean descendant, successor, or nation, depending on its usage. Likewise *father* can at times mean ancestor, predecessor, or founder. It's not easy to determine how Moses is using the terms in Genesis 10.

Of Japheth's seven "sons," further information is given only about the first and fourth sons, Gomer and Javan. Why the selectivity?

Biblical history is often *selective* history. Biblical authors are not interested in satisfying our curiosity. Their aim is to tell us something about God and His redemptive work.

The Bible is a story about how God chose to use a nation called "Israel" to bless the world. But where did Israel come from? And what makes Israel unique? Those are the kinds of questions Moses is interested in answering for us in Genesis 10.

In Genesis 10 Moses begins with Japheth. His name usually appears last in the names of Noah's sons. Here it's first. When we look at Japheth's offspring, we can make a couple of important observations.

1. *They include 14 nations.* Most of the names in Genesis 10 are personal names. But the personal names become representative of nations. In fact, later in the OT we'll see some of the personal names as national names. For instance, "Magog" appears in Ezekiel 38, and "Tubal" in Isaiah 66.

2. *They settled to the north and west of Israel.* It's noteworthy that most of us here are descendants of Japheth. We won't take time to identify each of the names listed. If you have a good Study Bible, you'll find many of them.

We're given some important terms in verse 5. Ronald Youngblood explains, "*Territories* is a geographic term, *clans* an ethnic term, *nations* a political term and *language* a linguistic term."

B. There are the descendants of Ham (6-20). "The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

8 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah 12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. 13 Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, 14 Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites. 15 Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, 16 Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, 17 Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, 18 Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites. Later the Canaanite clans scattered 19 and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

20 These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations."

Ham had four "sons," and further information is given about the first, second, and fourth sons. A couple of observations about Ham's offspring...

1. *They include 30 nations.*

2. *They settled in southwest Asia and northeast Africa.* For instance, "Cush" is located in the upper Nile region. "Mizraim" is the word for "Egypt."

One descendant of Ham is given further ink. His name is Nimrod. According to verses 8-9, he was a "mighty warrior" and a "mighty hunter." And the text relates a saying about Nimrod, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."

What's going on here? The Hebrew word for "might warrior" in essence indicates Nimrod was a mighty man, a man of great power. He used his power to establish a strong, extensive kingdom. That seems to be why Nimrod is mentioned here.

Commentator G. Aalders comments, "Nimrod is introduced not so much as the first great warrior as an individual person, but rather as the founder of the first 'power state.' The rise of these 'power states' became the main line of history from that point on as one mighty kingdom succeeded the other as the predominant force in the world at that particular time. The history of humanity actually became the record of mighty kingdoms, and Nimrod was the one who 'fathered' that basic characteristic of human history."

Nimrod started his kingdom in the Shinar region--that's where the tower of Babel was located (11:2). Later he moved on to Assyria. It's interesting that Micah 5:6 calls Assyria the land of Nimrod.

Nimrod wouldn't be the last world ruler, that's for sure.

He's also called a "mighty hunter." Henry Morris offers an interesting comment at this point, "The reference to Nimrod's hunting prowess suggests that wild beasts were thought to be a source of danger at the time and that Nimrod acquired a heroes reputation by protecting the population against them... Before the Flood, with lush vegetation everywhere, there was an abundance of food for the animals; but the post-Flood world was very different and many of the larger animals particularly may have found it difficult to survive after a time. The fossil record...indicates that there were tremendous animals living at the time that might well have been feared as a potentially serious danger to mankind in the early centuries after the Flood, until they became

extinct. Consequently a strong man who could hunt and slay such great animals would assume the role of hero and benefactor to mankind and would easily acquire a great following."

C. There are the descendants of Shem (21-31). "Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber. 22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. 24 Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber. 25 Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan. 26 Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. 30 The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

31 These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations. "

Shem had five "sons" mentioned in verse 22. But something else stands out about Shem, as stated in verse 21. He was the ancestor of all the "sons of Eber."

Why are we told that? The name "Eber" is significant. It comes from the verb *abar* which means "to pass over or through." It's this word that is the apparent source of the word "Hebrew."

And Eber had a son named "Peleg." The word *peleg* in Hebrew means "to divide or split." Apparently, Peleg was named after Babel, following the dividing of the peoples. Peleg became the ancestor of the people who spoke the Hebrew language. We'll see Peleg again in chapter 11, because it's through Peleg's line that a man named Abram was born.

Now a couple of insights about Shem's offspring...

1. *They include 26 nations.* As represented by the 26 names listed, and...

2. *They settled in the Middle East.* In fact, Japheth is the father of the Indo-European nations, Ham the father of the Afro-Asian nations, and Shem of the Semitic nations.

Question. Did you happen to tally the number of nations in Genesis 10? There were fourteen in Japheth's line, thirty in Ham's, and twenty-six in Shem's. Altogether, that makes seventy. Any significance?

Seventy was the number of Jacob's family members that went down to Egypt (Gen 46:27). And four hundred years later those seventy would become a nation of two million plus, the nation of Israel, God's chosen people.

Furthermore, if you look at 1 Chronicles 1 you'll find a genealogical record that's almost identical to this one in Genesis 10. The same seventy nations in Genesis 10 are listed in the same order in 1 Chronicles, a book which highlights the history of the nation of Israel.

Now, look again. Look back at the names in Genesis 10, and what do you see? A bunch of names? Yes, seventy in fact, but is that all? Look again, and ponder. Before us are the names of seventy people and people groups. Real people. Different people. People who've come and gone. They walked on this planet, married, worked jobs, and knew the joys and challenges of raising children. They faced the hardship of living in a sin-cursed world just like we do. And in the end, *every one of them died.*

There were no exceptions. *None.*

We need to read Genesis 10 every once in awhile for many reasons, but I'd like to mention two as we think about the application of this text.

Application: What lessons can we learn from Genesis 10? Here are two...

1. *Genesis 10 reminds us of our frailty.* I'm struck by the brevity of life when my eyes scan through the names on this page. Japheth. Gomer. Magog. Madai. Javan. Tubal. And on and on the list goes.

These people lived, but they're not living any longer. Some lived longer than others, but none are still living. Genesis 10 reminds us of our frailty.

I enjoy talking with older people and hearing their stories of life in days gone by. My grandmother is 93 now. I've never heard my grandmother say, "Brad, my life sure went by *slowly*." No, our lives rush by.

We are mortal. We are weak. But we don't want to admit it. Why not? Because we have a problem, a fundamental problem. What is it? It's a twofold problem.

- We are sinners by nature. We're born with a sinful bent, a depraved heart. We inherited it from our parents, who inherited it from their parents--all the way back to Noah, and ultimately to Adam.

Nobody teaches us how to sin, do they? But on the other hand, nobody forces us to sin either. We're not robots. Rather...

- We are sinners by choice. Sin affected every one of the seventy names and nations represented in Genesis 10. Sin is not merely a white problem, nor a black problem. It's a *human* problem.

Every person in Genesis 10 was a sinner by nature and by choice. And so is every person on the planet today, including those of us in this room.

We are sinners. And the inevitable consequence of being a sinner is this. We're going to die. "The wages of sin is death (Rom 3:23)."

Oh, we know that--or at least we say we do. But often we don't live like we know it. If we did, why would we spend so much time and energy on things that won't matter one iota 100 years from now? And why would we ignore matters of eternal importance: like getting to know Christ, like being a godly husband and father, like showing the love of Christ to our neighbors.

Dear friend, look at Genesis 10. I mean, *look!* Do you see the brevity of life? Will you do something about it today? Will you admit your mortality, your weakness, your *frailty*, and chose to live in light of eternity?

You say, "Is there hope for frail sinners?" Indeed, there is! And we see it in Genesis 10, if we'll look closely. Lesson #1, we see our frailty. Lesson #2...

2. *Genesis 10 reminds us of God's faithfulness.* After Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise in Genesis 3:15. He said He would send a Deliverer to reverse the curse of sin. And what God promises, He performs--because He is *faithful*. Genesis 10 illustrates two things about our faithful God. First...

- God has a plan. What may seem like random chance and chaos to us is under the sovereign control of God. It's true. History is *His story*.

Remember Acts 17:26? "From one man he [God] 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 has a plan. There's something else we learn about our faithful God in Genesis 10...

- God works through people to accomplish His plan. People matter to God. He sees *individuals*, not masses. And He uses individuals to fulfill His purposes.

He spared Noah, the man who found grace in His sight. He chose his son Shem to carry on the line of promise. In time God chose a descendant of Shem, Abraham, and formed a covenant with him. He gave him a son of promise, Isaac, who had twin sons. God chose the younger son, Jacob, to carry on the promise, and formed the offspring of his twelve sons into the chosen nation of Israel.

God chose one of the twelve sons, Judah, to be the connecting line to the coming Messiah. Later God gave Israel a special king, a descendant of Judah named David, and promised to rule the world through one of his offspring.

Ultimately, the plan of God climaxed when God Himself became a man, as a royal son of David. And Jesus Christ died on a Roman Cross in the place of frail, sinful people.

Why did He do it? It all happened according to God's plan, a plan we see taking shape all the way back in Genesis 10.

Think about it. God works through people to accomplish His plan. Our significance comes when we do what we were created to do.

May I ask a question? Are you doing what you were created to do? Are you living a life for the glory of Your Maker?

Genesis 10 reminds us that God is the Creator of *all* humanity, the entire human race. Seventy different nations are mentioned here, but they have this in common. They exist because of God and for God.

Know this. There are not many gods, and there are not many ways to God. There is one God, and there is but one way to God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bottom Line: In a world full of death, there's hope through the One who conquered death.

Jesus said this in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." May God be praised!