

## THE STORY: UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE OF THE BIBLE

### Week 5 – Who Are All These People?

The world was spiraling downward. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8) in the midst of God's judgment!

The flood was universal. It wasn't localized. The entire earth was inundated. Gen. 6:12-13 - *The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.*<sup>12</sup> *So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.*<sup>13</sup> *And God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'*

Gen. 7:6 - *Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth.*

Gen. 7:19 - *And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.*

God's mercy: Noah and his family were left. (8 of them – Noah and his wife, Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives).

Mankind wasn't destroyed because:

- God created man for relationship
- God desires to dwell with man (Ex. 25:8)
- God's plan is always Plan A

Following the judgment of the flood, God reiterated His plan to Noah and his sons: be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth.

Shem – the forefather of the Shemites/Semites – families stretching from Asia Minor to the northern mountains of the Tigris region to southern Mesopotamia (Iraq) to the Persian Gulf and ultimately to North India. The most prominent of Shem's descendants is Eber, the forefather of Abram (11:14-26).

Japheth – the father of one large branch of the Gentile world – Europe/Asia Minor – “Indo-Europeans.” Asia Minor – the southwest part of Asia – most of what is present-day Turkey.

Ham – the father of the other branch of Gentiles including large empires: Northern Africa, Libya, Egypt.

Gen. 9:19 - *These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.* The entire earth was populated through the 3 sons of Noah. Acts 17:26 – Paul, in speaking to the men of Athens - *And He has made from one blood<sup>[c]</sup> every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*

Gen. 9:20-25 - *And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son*

*had done to him. Then he said: 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.'*

In the writing of Genesis, Moses didn't emphasize the guilt of Noah – but rather emphasized the sin of Ham. Ham saw the nakedness of his father, Noah. Ham's son's line would be cursed. Canaan would be cursed. Why would Canaan be cursed? We can trust God is not punishing the son (Canaan) for the sin of the father (Ham). This goes against the heart and justice of God. Ezekiel 18:4b - *The soul who sins shall die.* Each is responsible for their own sin. What we find in Noah's statement in Gen. 9:25 is a prophecy. Through Noah's prophecy, God tells Ham what *will happen* to his son, Canaan. The earlier inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham were the Canaanites.

MOSES recorded Noah's words? When did Moses live? Most Biblical scholars place Moses at approx. 1500 BC. Genesis was probably written sometime after the Exodus (1445 BC) and before the entrance into Canaan (1405 BC). Moses had been commissioned by God to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Moses was the leader of over two million refugees who came out of Egypt journeying toward the Promised Land – Canaan. Moses was charged with instilling in his people the resolve to conquer the enemies. Think of the Exodus. What happened? God miraculously delivered them. God's deliverance of them from Egypt proved His faithfulness. The Exodus proved Yahweh/Jehovah (Ex. 3:14) to be the ONLY GOD – the Creator and the Redeemer – Who is faithful. The gods of Egypt were defeated by the one true God of Israel. The Torah/the Pentateuch – that which Moses wrote – after the exodus from Egypt displays the glory of God. The Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) provided the content for the faith of Israel.

Why would Moses record Noah's prophetic words regarding Ham's sin? Why would this be recorded in Genesis at this time? And WHY would the curse fall on Canaan and not Ham? Whom did God tell the children of Israel to come against and destroy when they entered the Promised Land? The Canaanites! Dt. 9:4 - *Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.* In Genesis 9:25 we're reading of the historic legitimacy of Israel's later conquest of the Canaanites – because of their wickedness. This passage of Scripture re: the curse on Canaan provides the Biblical basis for the conquest of Canaan: they were wicked! By prophetic revelation, Noah foresaw that the moral flaws evidenced by Ham would be more fully manifested in Canaan. The curse falls on the Canaanites because of their sin, not Ham's.

All the nations of the world would come through Noah's three sons. The overarching theme of the Bible is the glory of God. The Bible moves toward the ultimate purpose or goal of history – God's glory! And, as such, during the course of history, God's glory is displayed as God deals with the redeemed, and with those who are not redeemed. God's glory is displayed as He is sovereign over ALL, including. . .

- NATIONS - Job 12:23 – He makes nations great and destroys them; He enlarges nations and guides them; Isa. 14:24-27; Jer. 10:7 – He is King of the nations; Dan. 2:36-45 – Nebuchadnezzar’s dream re: the image – the empires of the world: Babylon, Medo-Persia; Greece, Rome, the revived Roman empire; the kingdom of God)
- RULERS – Ex. 9:16 – God raised up Pharaoh to display His power so that God’s name would be proclaimed in all the earth. Isa. 44:28-45:7 – Cyrus of Persia performed all God’s pleasure; Dan. 2:21 – God removes kings and establishes kings; Dan. 4:17 - the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.
- SATAN - Jn. 12:31 – the ruler of the world was cast out when Jesus died on the cross, Satan no longer having power over death; Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:7-10 – war broke out in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels; Rev. 20:1-3 – Satan will be bound for 1,000 years in the abyss during the Mill. Kingdom.

Isn’t this a bit political?

- Isa. 9:6 – “Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the GOV’T shall be upon His shoulders and His name will be called. . . .”
- Psa. 2 – Jesus’ rule and reign is highlight – over the nations.
  - Psa. 2:6 – *I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill*
- Dan. 2:36-45 - Nebuchadnezzar’s dream concerning the image whose body parts represented different EMPIRES – different NATIONS? And then we read of GOD’S KINGDOM!
  - Much of the book of Daniel was written in Aramaic because it was written to/about the Gentile NATIONS!

The Bible covers the entire scope of history from beginning to end, from eternity past to eternity future. All that unfolds gives glory to God. Romans 9:17 - *For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*

Regarding the big picture of Scripture, we need to understand God’s plan for the nations – ALL the nations - descending through Noah’s sons. God’s promised line for blessing for the world is promised through Shem (Gen. 11:10-26). Abraham comes through Shem’s line (Gen. 11:26). The Messiah comes from Abraham (Matt. 1:1 – *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*) (Gen. 12:3). Abraham was a Gentile – from Ur of the Chaldeans (present day Iraq). Abraham’s father, Terah, was an idol worshipper – he served many gods (Josh. 24:2). God chose Abram, exalted father, and told him to leave his country, his family. Abraham is called a Hebrew (Gen. 14:13) which means one who has crossed over – from the other side. Isaac would come from Abraham. Through Isaac, the promise would come (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7). The promise would not come through Ishmael. God created Israel through Jacob (Isa. 43:1) whose name was changed to Israel. Jacob/Israel was the father of the 12 tribes – of the nation of Israel.

We see all the nations of the world coming from Noah's three sons. We see God creating a new nation through Jacob (Isa. 43:1) – Israel. And, God would use Israel as an instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18). Israel is a nation. It is the ONE nation that God chose to accomplish His purposes. More about that next week. Read II Sam. 7:23-24.

Regarding God using Israel as an instrument of blessing for the world, let's look at Noah's words found in Gen. 9:26-27 - *And he said: 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem (Japheth would be blessed through Shem); and may Canaan be his servant.* In Gen. 9:26 we read that blessings would come to Japheth (Gentiles) through Shem. The blessings do NOT come from Shem but through Shem. The blessing flows out of Shem's relationship with God. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem. Our main focus is GOD. The Messiah would come through Shem! Japheth, which means "to enlarge," "to make wide," will be blessed – will be enlarged - in his relationship to Shem. Japheth and his descendants will occupy a widely extended territory: Europe and Asia Minor – most of modern-day Turkey.

In Scripture we have. . .

- The nations/the Gentiles
- And we have Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob – the Jewish people.

The Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) provided the content for the faith of Israel. The Torah also provided the content for the faith of all those outside of the nation of Israel who were watching God's relationship with Israel and witnessing God's faithfulness to Israel. God's plan of redemption is for the world. Repeatedly we come across the phrase in the OT, "that the world may know." Know what? That there is a God in Israel. The world was watching God's relationship with Israel. When Israel obeyed God, God blessed them. When Israel disobeyed God, God chastised them. God created the world as a place where He would be known, served, worshipped, and where He would be present – where He would dwell with man. Hab. 2:14 – one day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. That is God's desire. That is God's purpose – His goal. Through Israel, God has demonstrated Who He is to the world!

Biblical illustration of how God used the children of Israel to bless the nations:

Following the Exodus from Egypt, we read. . . Ex. 12:37-38 - *Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.* <sup>38</sup>*A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock.* When God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, people from Gentile nations – "a mixed multitude" were delivered with the Jews. Egypt was a conquering nation. When they conquered other people groups, they took captives who became their slaves. It appears that within this "mixed multitude" many nations of the world were

represented. The children of Israel did not leave Egypt without taking Gentiles. God blessed the Gentile mixed multitude with freedom through His deliverance of the children of Israel through the blood of the Passover Lamb!

Genesis 10 outlines the Table of Nations for us – through Noah’s three sons. However, before we look at Genesis 10, we need to digest Genesis 11 – the Tower of Babel. The division of the nations in Genesis 10 occurred after the confusion of languages at Babel. This is evident by the fact that in Gen. 10:20 and in Genesis 10:31 we are told that the division of the sons of Noah to their respective lands was according to their languages. This division, according to their languages, could only have occurred following the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel.

Genesis 10:8-10 *Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.” <sup>10</sup> And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,*

Genesis 11:1-4 - *Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. <sup>4</sup> And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”* Mankind was striving to make a name for themselves. They were attempting to ascend up to heaven. God had originally told mankind to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Nimrod (a skillful hunter) settled in Shinar (Gen. 10:10) – Babylon (The beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel in the land of Shinar [Gen. 10:10]. Dan. 1:2 – King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and carried articles from the Temple into the land of Shinar. King Nebuchadnezzar was the King of. . . Babylon.) It was here that the Tower of Babel was built. The intent: to reach the heavens (sound like Lucifer’s desires in Isaiah 14:13-14 - *‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ . . .* and to make a name for themselves. Man’s pride!

With the exception of Jerusalem, no other city is mentioned more than Babylon in the Bible. Scripture refers to Babylon between 280-290 times (Jerusalem – 300 times). Contrast: Babylon is the city where man first began to worship himself in organized rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-9 – the Tower of Babel). God placed His name in Jerusalem (II Chron. 6:6). Do we see the CONFLICT/warefare between Babylon and Jerusalem throughout Scripture? Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC. Zech. 5:5-11 – in the end times, wickedness will again rear its ugly head in the same place where it began – Babylon. Zech. 14:4 – Jesus will return to Jerusalem.

Genesis 11:5-9 - *But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.* <sup>6</sup> *And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.* <sup>7</sup> *Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”* <sup>8</sup> *So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.* <sup>9</sup> *Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.* Contrast: man’s potential contrasted with the wisdom and power of God. With a simple act, God pulls the plug on man’s grand exhibition of his own greatness.

### Genesis 10

- Genesis 10 is the most ancient record we possess of the roots of the nations.
- Genesis 10 provides us with a bridge between the period from Adam to Abraham.
- Nothing is mentioned in Genesis 10 concerning any belief in God! Notice that Genesis 10:1 and Genesis 10:32 contain the phrase, “after the flood.” Following such a catastrophic judgment as the flood, wouldn’t we expect to read about people calling out to God? And yet here we have a table of nations and there is no mention of anyone following the one true God.
- In Genesis 10 seventy nations are mentioned. Deut. 32:8 – God set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel (70 nations/70 Jews who went down into Egypt [Gen. 46:27; Ex. 1:5]) Significance of Deut. 32:8: Israel impacts the world! (Gen. 18:18; Rom. 11:15) Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, Jewish, was used in Egypt to save the world from famine. John 4:22 tells us that salvation is of the Jews (the Messiah comes through the Jewish tribe of Judah).

Who are all these people in Genesis 10 and 11? The nations – from the sons of Noah – the nations upon whom God is focused concerning His plan of redemption – the nations who would hear about – know about God – through the descendants of Abraham. God is sovereign not only over the redeemed. God is sovereign over ALL!

At the mid-point of Genesis 11 we read of the genealogy of Shem through Peleg. Through Peleg’s line we find Nahor who begot Terah and Terah begot Abram.

AFTER 2,000 years of dealing with MANKIND – no Jews or Gentiles, just “MANKIND,” God calls ABRAM. . . .

### QUESTIONS

Identify BIG PICTURE themes from this lesson.

How do you now understand the nations and Israel?

What is their significance within God’s plan?

Was there anything new to you through this lesson?

HOMEWORK

Identify in your Bible all the verses where “that the world may know” is found. Note the context, who’s speaking, who are the recipients of these words, and what the world is to know.

What is the significance of “That the world may know”?

How is it part of the big picture?

Read week 6 when you receive it.