

## Genesis Chapter 10 and 11 – John Karmelich

1. If I had to describe the next two chapters in one word, it would be the word “division”.
  - a) When I say division, I mean in the sense that the world becomes spiritually divided.
  - b) Notice what Jesus says on “division”. Jesus said, “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:51-53, NIV)
    - i) Jesus preached that not all people would get it. In fact, families would be divided as some members would be born again and others would not.
    - ii) In that “sense”, we are going to see that here in Genesis 10 and 11.
    - iii) Despite having Noah as a living witness, most people are going to turn away from God. We are going to have “divisions” among the descendants of Noah.
2. Chapters 10 and 11 are the bridge between Noah and Abraham.
  - a) Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish nation. Abraham was specifically called by God to be the father of the Jewish people.
    - i) Beginning in Chapter 12, we start a narrative detail of Abraham’s life.
    - ii) Genesis changes focus in Chapter 12 from a worldwide perspective to a one-family perspective on Abraham and his descendants.
  - b) Chapters 10-11 are a 250-300 year period that describes the world-events in between the flood of Noah and the call of Abraham.
3. It’s time for disclaimers about Chapter 10. ☺
  - a) Chapter 10 is often called the “Table of Nations”. It lists 70 specific people that lead 70 specific tribes of nations.
    - i) Many of these nations are then mentioned elsewhere in the bible.
    - ii) Note that the Jews, (i.e., the Israelites) are not listed among these 70.
    - iii) In a sense, Chapters 10 and 11 are “non-Jewish”.
      - a) The word “Gentiles” and the word “Nations” are the same Hebrew word.
    - iv) The focus is on all the Gentile (non-Jewish) Nations.
  - b) Chapter 10, and parts of Chapter 11, read like a reference list. It is mostly genealogies.
    - i) It is difficult to read this like a straight narrative. In that sense, it is boring to read.
    - ii) This chapter is best to see this section as a reference.
    - iii) Most of the commentaries and study-bibles on this section are full of notes explaining who each of these 70 people (and tribes) are and who they become.
    - iv) Many bible commentaries focus on the “who question”. If you haven’t noticed by now, these lessons are on the “why question”. ☺
    - v) As a Christian, I have now studied this section of the bible several times in my life. Each time I learn what all of these names means. Soon afterwards, I forget. ☺
    - vi) For those of you fascinated by the “who” question, there are lots of wonderful encyclopedia-like commentaries out there that focus on who each of these nations are, the archeological evidence for these nations, and where they are geographically.
      - a) For example, you can read one of these names, and discover how “this one” ended up being an Arab-nation, or “this one” a Slavic nation, or “this one” a European nation.

4. If I had to pick the important thing to learn from these 70 names, it is validates bible as truth.
  - a) Remember that God told Noah and his 3 sons to be “fruitful and multiply” and fill the whole earth with people. We now have this recorded genealogy of the 3 sons of Noah and how their children became the origins of all the non-Jewish nations of the world.
  - b) “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.” (William F. Albright, cited in Boice, taken from David Guzik’s commentary on Genesis).
5. For many people, the best way to read Chapters 10-11 might be with a map at hand. Most study bibles come with a map of Chapter 10. As an appendix to this lesson, I also cut and past two maps and a chart. You may want to separate the last page of this lesson and keep as a reference.
  - a) Note that for some of the nations, there is some debate as the exact history and location. Archeologists study many secular records to validate the history of these names and people. Most have been validates by their locations. In a few cases, the exact location of where these tribes have ended up is uncertain. If you look at more than one bible map, you will see that some of the locations vary while some are “more certain”.
6. With that said, let’s get started. Chapter 10, Verse 1: This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.
  - a) Let’s look at the last verse of Chapter 10: 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.
    - i) The first and last verses of Chapter 10 are both similar summary statements.
    - ii) In between the first and last verse of Chapter 10, are essentially, the details.
  - b) OK, time for the first “why” question. Why did the bible bother to list these people?
    - i) Let’s face it, God could have summarized Chapters 10 and 11 much more briefly and said, “The sons of Noah then had a bunch of kids, who spread out over all the earth.” Why bother to list everyone? Unless you are an archeologist, this is pretty dull reading. ☺ How are these verses relevant to our life today?
    - ii) First of all, they are a reminder of the validity of the bible. God listed all of them and archeologists have validated them as to support the literalness of the bible.
    - iii) Second, God does care for all people. Many choose to willfully turn from God.
      - a) “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:3, NIV)
      - b) Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 22:14, NKJV)
    - iv) Remember that prior to the flood, most of the world chose to reject God. Noah spent roughly a hundred years building an ark. I suspect he was mocked for his efforts and no one cared to join him.
    - v) Now in the post flood world, with Noah being a living witness, most of the people we are going to read about choose to reject God. The “sin gene” was still present in Noah and his three sons. Despite the recent history of the flood, despite Noah remaining alive as a living witness, it shows how people still choose to reject God.
    - vi) The “why” answer of Genesis 10 and 11 is to show how the continual pattern of the world’s rejection of God. The bible is a repetitive pattern of the majority of people refusing to come to God despite God’s “best efforts” to call people out of their own free will to come to him.
    - vii) This is why I call Chapter 10 and 11 “divisions”.
      - a) It is about the division of people throughout the world.
      - b) It is about how people are divided about God. Few choose the right path.
      - c) The rest is just details! ☺

7. Verses 2-5: The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. <sup>3</sup> The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah. <sup>4</sup> The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim. <sup>5</sup> (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)
- a) Let's start with the good news. You don't have to memorize all of these names to get into heaven. ☺ Remember that this chapter reads like a reference dictionary.
  - b) If you want to see where these people end up geographically, look at the last page of this lesson, or consult your favorite study bible.
  - c) In these verses we start with one of the three sons of Noah, which is Japheth.
    - i) I suspect this is not a complete genealogy of Japheth's kids. It focuses on the specific ones that actually start nations. Each of these people were tribal leaders.
      - a) For example, Verse 4 takes one of the direct sons of Japheth and lists his sons. This is not done for every one of Japheth's children.
    - ii) You will find references to many of these names elsewhere in the bible.
    - iii) The good news is that I'm not going to cross-reference each of these people and nation in this lesson. ☺
    - iv) For those who do study further on the names and locations, it does help further bible study. For example, Ezekiel refers to Magog, as does Revelation. Once you learn that Magog means to the "north, or extreme north", (most likely, it is Russia) the prophecies of Ezekiel have a better visual picture, and help you to understand where these people are in relationship to Israel.
8. Verse 6: The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. <sup>7</sup> The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah, Sheba and Dedan.
- a) Verse 6 now changes the focus to another son of Noah: Ham.
  - b) Remember that Ham, and his direct son Canaan is the one Noah cursed after the drunken incident of Chapter 9.
  - c) There are more descendants named from Ham than from the other two sons.
    - i) Almost half of the 70 names in this chapter are from "the cursed" Ham's line.
  - d) Again, If I wanted, I could give you pages of information on each one of these names and the nations, locations they founded. I'll also predict that in six months you'll forget which one was which. ☺ I'm keeping my lessons focused on the "why" questions, not the "who" questions.
    - i) The "why" question and answer of this section is that God wants us to know that Noah's sons did "fill the earth and multiply", and further, seventy nations were "planted" on three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa).
  - e) Please remember that these names are referred to elsewhere in the bible. For example, Sheba and Dedan are mentioned in Ezekiel 38. Most likely, they represent (what is today called) Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. The "Queen of Sheba" visited Solomon (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 10) and Jesus himself refers to the Queen of Sheba, who is called the "Queen of the South" in Matthew 12:42, and Luke 11:31.
    - i) My point is to learn the background of some of these names is helpful in getting a geographic picture of studying the rest of the bible.
9. Verse 8: Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." <sup>10</sup> The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. <sup>11</sup> From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah <sup>12</sup> and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.
- a) We now interrupt this genealogy to give you an actual story. ☺
  - b) Verses 8-11 focus on the accounts of a guy named Nimrod.

- c) It is important to understand that when the text says Nimrod was a “mighty hunter”, it refers to a “hunter of men”. It implies that Nimrod lead a great rebellion against those who want to follow God. Remember that Noah and his 3 kids were still alive and being a “living witness” to the flood story. Here was Nimrod leading a rebellion.
    - i) Remember back in Chapter 9 that Noah cursed Ham and his son Cush. Now Cush has this son Nimrod. Nimrod is credited with being the founder of the City of Babylon, the center of the Babylonian Empire as well as the founder of Nineveh the headquarters of the Assyrian Empire. These were the two empires that captured the Israelites and lead them away into captivity.
    - ii) Many centuries later, after Israel split into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom was eventually lead away by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom was eventually lead away by the Babylonians. Here we read of one guy named Nimrod, who was the founder of both locations.
  - d) Remember that Genesis is a book of “beginnings”. The focus of Nimrod is the first major, organized rebellion against God.
    - i) There are many places in the Old and New Testament where we get “hints” that somehow the leader of the Assyrians and the leader of the Babylonians are demonic and have Satanic origins.
      - a) In Isaiah Chapter 14, Isaiah is talking about the fall of the king of Babylon. By the time you get to Verse 12 of that chapter, Isaiah is talking about Satan himself, implying that Satan is the power behind the king.
  - e) For a Christian, when we read here of Nimrod, we can see “hints” and “word-pictures” that are similar to the coming Anti-Christ.
    - i) Nimrod, like the coming Anti-Christ, organizes a rebellion against God.
    - ii) Nimrod, like the coming Anti-Christ is a great world leader.
    - iii) Nimrod, like the coming Anti-Christ rules by force and is a man of war. (Daniel Chapters 11-12 speaks of the war-like aspects of this coming Anti-Christ)
    - iv) Genesis, the book of “beginnings”, has here the first organized rebellion against God. In Revelations, the book of “endings”, we have the scenes of final organized rebellion(s) against God.
  - f) For you history buffs, it is important to understand that the origins of pagan-religion go back to the founding of Babylon. The multi-god concept that is part of the Roman and Greek culture had its roots in Babylon.
    - i) The first Roman Emperor to become a Christian was Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. Until then, Christianity was an outlawed religion. In order to get public acceptance of Christianity, some of the local pagan holidays were adopted by Christians. For example, the word “Easter” has nothing to do with Jesus. It is Babylonian in its roots. Because people were accustomed to having a spring holiday to honor “Easter” (fertility, painted eggs, etc.), Emperor Constantine used that time of year to have the Christian resurrection holiday.
    - ii) Personally, I don’t have a problem calling “Resurrection Sunday” Easter. I believe Christians can use whatever “excuse of a holiday” to teach people about Jesus. We as Christians use Easter Sunday as a day to remember the resurrection. If other people use it to focus on “spring” and bunnies” (symbols of fertility), than it is just another witnessing opportunity.
  - g) Ok, enough of Nimrod for now. I’m craving more genealogical records right now! ☺
10. Verse 13: Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, <sup>14</sup> Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Capthorites.
- a) There, don’t you feel better now that you know this information? ☺
  - b) Remember that we’re still reading the descendants of the “cursed” Cush.

- c) Among this list is the Philistines. The Israelites spent centuries battling this group over territories to the Promised Land. Most of King David's battles were with this group.
  - d) For those who don't know this, the word "Palestine" is a derivative of the word "Philistines". The Romans didn't want to acknowledge the Jews as the rightful owners of Israel, so they called the land "Palestine" after the Philistines.
    - i) This is why I personally avoid the word Palestine to describe Israel. God gave that land to the Jewish people as an unconditional promise. The land is for Israel.
    - ii) The modern "Palestinians" are not the Philistines. The modern Palestinians are a group of nomadic Arabs who settled in Israel over the past few centuries.
11. Verse 15: Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, <sup>16</sup> Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, <sup>17</sup> Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, <sup>18</sup> Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.
- a) Let's back up for a second:
    - i) Noah had 3 sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.
    - ii) Ham had 4 sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan
    - iii) The last few verses focused on Cush and his sons.
    - iv) Verse 15 focuses on Canaan and his sons.
  - b) For you regular bible readers, you should recognize most of these names.
    - i) The next several books of the bible is all about Moses leading the people out of Egypt, wandering in the desert for 40 years, and towards the promised land.
    - ii) The next leader after Moses is Joshua. Joshua actually leads the Israelites into the Promised Land (Israel). That land was not barren. It was full of these people.
      - a) "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. (Joshua 3:10, NIV)
      - b) The same names we read in Joshua 3:10 are mostly the same names as the sons of Canaan. This shows that Canaan's descendants lived in Israel.
  - c) Remember back in Chapter 9 that Noah specifically cursed Canaan after the drunken incident. From this verse, we get the idea that Noah was given a prophecy. These tribal groups were eventually (over 400 years later) destroyed by the Israelites.
    - i) When I say destroyed, I mean it. How many Girgashites do you know? ☺ It is amazing to consider the Jewish clan has survived all these millennia while every other group of that time era and that location has been destroyed. It is more proof that the hand-of-God was behind this whole section of history.
12. Verse 18b: Later the Canaanite clans scattered <sup>19</sup> 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.
- a) Here we have the first mention of Sodom and Gomorrah, which we'll discuss in detail when we get to Chapters 13-14 in a few lessons.
  - b) We get clues all through Genesis of the wickedness of the descendants of Ham.
    - i) First we get the Nimrod story in this chapter.
    - ii) In the next chapter is the tower of Babel story, which Nimrod probably organized.
    - iii) In Genesis Chapters 13-14 we'll get the Sodom and Gomorrah story and how God destroyed those cities for their wicked behavior.
    - iv) In Genesis Chapter 15, we'll learn how God told Abraham his descendants would return to the Promised Land, but not for another 400 years. God said the reason is "The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16b, NIV). The point is the Amorites, a descendant of Canaan, was bad, and was going to get worse over the next 400 years, and God would use the Israelites to punish them for their sins.

- c) Which leads us back to Noah's curse on Canaan.
  - i) Noah either knew or predicted that Ham's son Canaan was cursed because he didn't care for the things of God. Noah was predicting that his descendants would get "worse and worse" until eventually, God did some mercy killing.
  - ii) This pattern is what we see in the end times. The wickedness of the world gets worse and worse. It is only the influence of praying godly people that prevents wickedness from 100% controlling the world. There will be, there has to be a day, when, once again, God "pulls out" those who are saved and destroys those who are wicked. That is the pattern established in Genesis. That pattern will happen again. That is what the majority of the book of Revelation deals with.
- 13. Verse 20: These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.
  - a) Verse 20 is the wrap up verse of the descendants of Ham.
  - b) It is not a pretty picture. The bible often describes the ugly aspects of sin and its long-term consequences. God often allows sin to manifest itself in its ugliest form to show us and remind us of the consequences of sin.
  - c) Most scholars estimate that Noah or Shem wrote this genealogy section and recorded the records for Moses to inscribe to us. I doubt when Shem wrote this he fully understood all the implications of his father-Noah's curse, nor all the sins of his descendants. It is a reminder that none of us understand the full-picture of how God works. It is best for us that we see in hindsight how God is working, and use that as a reminder to trust God for the present and future situations we encounter.
- 14. Verse 21: Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.
  - a) Now we are listing the sons of Noah's son Shem.
  - b) The most important thing to remember is that Shem is the guy through whom the Messiah comes.
    - i) This made me think about Noah's "blessings and curses" upon his 3 sons.
    - ii) When you read that section in Chapter 9, Noah blessed the two "good" sons, Shem and Japheth, and cursed his "bad" son Ham. When you read that passage, the "special blessing" went to Japheth and not Shem. You would think Shem would get a few bonus points for being in the ancestral line of the Messiah. ☺
    - iii) So why did Noah give a better blessing to Japheth over Shem? In that passage, Noah essentially said that Japheth would have more kids and they would spread to the descendants of Shem and Shem was "just" blessed.
      - a) Maybe Noah blessed Japheth because as a "good son", would be blessed by the Messiah. That is why it mentions that "Japheth live in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27). It is the concept that Japheth's kids would be blessed by the descendants of the Messiah.
      - b) Obviously the text in Genesis 9 does not state this. It is just speculation.
  - c) Notice in Verse 21 there is no mention of Shem and Japheth's brother Ham.
    - i) I suspect this is another subtle hint of the blessings of the two good brothers and the one "cursed" brother.
- 15. Verse 22: The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. <sup>23</sup> The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. <sup>24</sup> Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.
  - a) There, don't you feel better now that you know these names? ☺
  - b) In Chapter 11, part of this genealogy is repeated, but the emphasis in Chapter 11 is on the specific descendants of Shem that lead to Abraham, which is the Messianic line.
  - c) Nothing about these people are listed. It does not say they accomplished anything good or bad, it just lists their names.
  - d) These verses by themselves have little meaning. One has to read them in context of the remainder of Chapter 10 and 11. Let me add the next verse and I'll explain further.

16. Verse 25, (the continuation of the genealogy of Noah's son Shem): Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.  
<sup>26</sup> Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>27</sup> Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,  
<sup>28</sup> Obal, Abimael, Sheba, <sup>29</sup> Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. <sup>30</sup> The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.  
<sup>31</sup> These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.
- a) The key to understanding why this whole section is included is the reference to "Peleg" in Verse 25. In that verse it says, "because in his (Peleg's) time the earth was divided".
    - i) Scholars have two views on this. I'm about to tell you which is the right view and which is the wrong view. ☺ Then you decide which is best.
    - ii) One view is that the great "continental split" occurred at this time. In children's schoolbooks, you find a picture of North & South America "joined" to Europe and Asia. Somehow they separated to their present location. Bible scholars will mention that the word for "earth" used here usually refers to land as opposed to people and therefore, it refers to a continental breaking.
      - a) What those schoolbooks don't tell you is that this map makes North & South America a lot smaller in order to make them "merge" with Europe and Asia. Further, they essentially eliminate most of Mexico and Central America to make it fit into that visual picture.
      - b) As you can tell, I don't believe this theory. I believe man migrated to the "America's" via Russia/Alaska or just sailed there. The same goes for the animals. It is a simple matter of migration. I believe animals evolve within the same specie, and change with the climate, but I have yet to see any evidence for cross-specie evolution.
    - iii) The second view is the word "division" is only about the dividing of the people and nations because that is the story at hand.
      - a) Which leads back to Verse 25. It says that in the days of Peleg, the world was "divided". That means, just what it says. During the days of Peleg is when the events of Chapter 11 (tower of Babel/scattering) happened.
      - b) I believe this view fits with the text. In Chapter 11, we have the story of the Tower of Babel. I believe the Tower of Babel was formed during the days of Peleg. God told Noah's sons to fill the earth and multiply, so their descendants were disobedient by sticking together. To punish their disobedience, God himself leads the scattering ("divisions) of the nations.
      - c) Personally, I believe if the continents divided at this point, the bible would have made a bigger deal about it. This is why I argue that the word "divided" here is about the division of people. That is main point of Chapter 11. Therefore, it gets a "mention" in Chapter 10. The genealogies listed in Chapter 10 overlap the genealogies of Chapter 11.
  - b) Which leads back to the question of "why list all these names of Shem's descendants?
    - i) What purpose does it serve for us to know this information?
    - ii) The answer is to contrast this genealogy with the one given in the latter half of Chapter 11. In Chapter 11 genealogy of Shem, it focuses on the "godly" line leading from Shem to Abraham. This genealogy here in Chapter 10 focuses on the rebellion that we read about in the Tower of Babel incident in Chapter 11.
    - iii) If you read the genealogy of Chapter 10 by itself it is difficult to see its purpose.
    - iv) Again, the secret to understanding this section is to read this in context of all of Chapters 10 and 11. Many of the names given here of Shem's descendants "didn't do much". I'm not saying they're all bad. But this list leads to the incident of the Tower of Babel. It is meant to be read in contrast with the "good genealogy" leading to Abraham. (If this is still confusing, please read on. That may help. ☺)

17. 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.
  - a) Verse 32 is the conclusion verse of this genealogy. If you remember a few pages back, I said it is best to read Verse 1 of this chapter together with Verse 32. They are very similar.
    - i) Verse 1 states the purpose of Chapter 10 is to give the genealogy of the three sons of Noah. Verse 32 states, essentially the same information as Verse 1.
    - ii) The verses between 1 and 32 are the details of the genealogy.
18. Chapter 11, Verse 1: Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. <sup>2</sup> As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.
  - a) As we start chapter 11, the first thing to remember is that we are “back-tracking” in time.
  - b) The time frame of Chapter 11 overlaps the time frame of Chapter 10.
  - c) Chapter 11 starts with the events that occurred soon after the flood ended and God commanded Noah and his sons to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”. (Gen. 9:7)
  - d) This verse is saying essentially, “When Noah and his extended family first started out, they didn’t all scatter in different directions. They all spoke the same language (probably Hebrew or a derivative thereof). Notice the verse does not say everyone went “eastward”, it implies that a majority or a “good chunk” of the clan leaders headed eastward.
    - i) Notice that it is not eastward of Mt. Ararat, where the ark rested, but it is eastward of Israel. “Shinar” is the great valley where Babylon is located, east of Israel.
19. Verse 3: They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."
  - a) The most important thing to learn about these verses is that they were disobeying God.
    - i) It wasn't so much that they were building this tower (later called the Tower of Babel in Verse 9), but they were disobeying God's orders. Remember that God told them to “fill the earth and multiply”. This large group all deciding to stick together in this one place (Babylon) and they were defying God's orders.
    - ii) Notice the end of Verse 4 says, “Not be scattered over the face of the whole earth”. That phrase alone tells you they were attempting to disobey God's orders.
  - b) Notice in Verse 4 the phrase, “A tower that reaches to the heavens”.
    - i) First of all, they were not being literal. They were not trying to build a skyscraper or a pyramid where the top is as high as God's home, as if that were possible.
    - ii) If they were being literal, why didn't they build this tower in the mountains at a high elevation as opposed to this plain in the valley?
  - c) The idea behind this tower is it is a “monument to man”. The fundamental concept behind all Babylonian-based false-worship is that it focuses on man's efforts. It is based on trying to please God based on our own efforts.
    - i) Genesis is a book of “beginnings”. Part of the beginnings is the start of the Babylonian system.
    - ii) Revelation is a book of “endings”. Chapters 17-18 are about the fall of Babylon. One of the interesting things to read in Revelation about the fall is the list of “things” that are no longer traded in Babylon. Revelation 18 lists lots of material things that are no longer “sold” in Babylon as it is now destroyed. Babylon represented the material-capital of the world as well as the religious capital of all things that are against the true-God. It is the “beginning” and “ending” of man's attempt to make their own “gods” apart from the true God.
    - iii) The “Tower of Babel” was probably designed to be a religious monument to mankind. It may have been a trade center as well, but the main purpose is that it was built in defiance of God's order to fill the earth and multiply.



- d) Before I move on, I should comment on the construction details of the Tower of Babel.
    - i) Verse 3 says, "They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar"
    - ii) Archeologists and geologists point out there is no stones in this valley, so the bricks were baked.
    - iii) There is a "hint" in these verses that whoever built this may have been worried about another flood, or at the least, God punishing them for not dispersing around the world. Therefore they may have built this to "protect themselves" from another worldwide flood or some other disaster.
20. Verse 5: But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. <sup>6</sup> The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."
- a) First of all, God is not thinking, "Oh no, the people are not obeying me...I better do something or else I'm in big trouble because they are all organized against me". ☺
  - b) This is about punishment for disobedience.
    - i) God is saying in effect, "Look, I told you people to go fill the earth. You want to disobey? Fine, let me scatter you myself!"
    - ii) Although the text does not say "how", I believe the tower was partially or completely destroyed. Whatever happened, it must have been enough of a scare to get the people to run and get back to filling the earth. I suspect, but cannot prove, there was some major disaster where the tower collapsed. That scared all the residents and they starting moving around the planet.
    - iii) The other possibility is to look at the text where it says in Verse 7 how God "confused their language". There may have been some miraculous event where all of sudden, people couldn't understand what anyone else was saying.
      - a) In a sense, this was the first "tongues" movement. ☺ In Acts Chapter 2 is the story of how people started miraculously speaking in different tongues. Apparently, the story in Acts is not the first time "new tongues" appeared.
      - b) This "confusion of language" may have been the "scare" that got those people to obey God's commandment to "get moving".
  - c) Notice in Verse 7 the word "us". It says, "Let us go down and confuse their language".
    - i) This is a case in the Hebrew where the word for God is in the plural. The same was true back in Genesis 1 where it says, "Let us make man in our image". (Genesis 1:26)
    - ii) Jewish commentators argue that God is "so big", it refers to the "majestic one", the idea of God's power is so vast, He speaks of himself in the plural.
      - a) My reaction? Nice try. ☺ We Christians just see it as another sign of how Jesus, in his pre-incarnate state, was with God in the beginning, as it states in the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, Verse 1.
21. Verse 8: So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup> That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.
- a) In Verse 8, we learn they stopped building the tower due to a labor shortage. ☺
    - i) The confusion of the tongues got people to leave this location and disperse around the world as God ordered them to.
  - b) If you haven't figured it out by now, the word "Babel" is the same root-word where we get the term Babylon. It is the location of Babylon.
  - c) Notice in Verse 9 it says, "The LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth".
    - i) What needs to be remembered from Verse 9 is the concept that "God's will, will be accomplished, whether we cooperate or not.

- ii) When we disobey God, God simply turns up the “incentive factor” to get us to do his will, or gets involved in the process himself.
- iii) As most Christians have had to learn the hard way, it is much easier to live your life in obedience to God than to allow God to “force his hand” and punish you to get his will accomplished.
- iv) One of the fundamental rules of life is “God is in charge, and we’re not”. Once you understand that statement and live by it, life becomes a lot less painful! Yes you still have problems and issues, but the alternatives of being disobedient causes much worse problems, both in this lifetime and for eternity.

22. Verse 10: This is the account of Shem. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. <sup>11</sup> And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>12</sup> When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. <sup>13</sup> And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup> When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. <sup>15</sup> And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>16</sup> When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. <sup>17</sup> And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>18</sup> When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. <sup>19</sup> And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup> When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. <sup>21</sup> And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>22</sup> When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. <sup>23</sup> And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>24</sup> When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. <sup>25</sup> And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>26</sup> After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

- a) This next section is a big chunk, but it is best read together.
- b) We have the genealogy of Noah’s son Shem, all the way to Abram (Abraham). His name gets changed from Abram to Abraham in Chapter 17.
- c) First, lets talk about the “why” question. Why list the genealogy of Shem to Abraham here and at this spot in the text?
  - i) The answer is because even when man defies God, God is there providing a solution. Are you confused? Good, then I’ll talk further. ☺
  - ii) In the last set of verses, we just read about man’s defiance of God’s order by sticking together and building the tower of Babel.
  - iii) In this set of verses we read of the godly line of the Messiah from Shem to Abraham.
  - iv) What’s my point? My point is despite the fact of man’s rebellion (Tower of Babel), God is going to provide a “sin-solution” with the Messiah (Jesus) paying the price for your sins.
  - v) Chapter 11 can be summarized by God saying, “You people are rebelling against the wonderful plans I have for you and your descendants. The good news is that I am God, and I knew in advance you were going to screw this up. ☺ Therefore, I am working on another plan at the same time. I am providing “myself” as a substitution for sins, because all sins must be paid for in full. Therefore, I am working on this messianic line, eventually leading up to Jesus. Before I get there, I have to start with Abraham, build up a nation and lots of other good things. ☺
    - a) (continuing) In the meantime, you the reader of this text should know that I’m not just “ignoring” the sin of the rebellion, and I will not let people who ignore God go on forever. A redemption has to come for those who believe in God as well as a redemption for the planet earth.”

- d) This leads us back to “in the days of Peleg, the earth was divided” (Genesis 10:25).
  - i) The division was that of those who willfully choose to obey God’s orders to multiply and fill the earth, and those who thought they could defy God.
  - ii) That section of the text appears to be written in contrast to the messianic line that eventually leads to the Messiah. It is a Genesis example of sin abounding, and grace abounding all the more so.
  - iii) “But where sin increased (e.g., “Tower of Babel”), grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20b-21, NIV)
- e) Now that I’ve given (what I believe) is the main point of this text, let me throw in a couple of more “tidbits”:
  - i) Notice the decreasing lifespan of the people on this list.
    - a) Each person lives a little less time than their father. From a scientific standpoint, this is because there is no longer a water (ice) canopy over the earth, and now ultraviolet rays are shortening life spans.
  - ii) Another thing to ponder from this genealogy is the long time span from Noah’s 3 sons until Abraham. This is about 250-300 years. Think how much history we have had during that time period.
    - a) This is the time era where man asked God, “OK, God, tell you what, supposed you killed every man except for one really good, really God-seeking person, won’t all of his descendents be good seeking? Is the God-seeking aspect part of our genetic makeup?
    - b) The answer is no. This time span showed man’s rebellion even with Noah and his 3 sons still around as living witnesses. The Tower of Babel, by my estimation was about 100-150 years after the flood (based on the idea that the world was divided during the days of Peleg.) It didn’t take man a long time to “get corrupt” again after the flood.

23. Verse 27: This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. <sup>28</sup> While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. <sup>29</sup> Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. <sup>30</sup> Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.

- a) From Verse 27 to the end of the chapter, we get some of the family details of Abram (i.e., Abraham’s) parents and siblings. Before I analyze this section to death, ☺ let’s look at some of the bigger concepts of this text.
  - i) We are now beginning the next major section of the bible, which is Abraham’s life.
  - ii) To give you an idea of how important Abraham is, he is mentioned 75 times in the New Testament alone. His name is mentioned 134 times just in Genesis.
    - a) We have 11 chapters so far from Adam to the birth of Abraham..
    - b) We are going to read 14 chapters from Abraham’s birth until his death.
    - c) Therefore, if you measure importance based on bible-content, Abraham is more important than everyone we’ve read so far (again, by this method).
    - d) Abraham is the only person who is honored by all three major religions (Christianity, Judaism and Muslims). He is considered the “patriarchic father” of all three religions.
- b) Before we actually get to the story of Abraham (again, Abram and Abraham are the same person), this story focuses on Abraham’s father Terah and Abraham’s two brother’s Nahor and Haran.
  - i) This paragraph says that Abraham’s brother Haran died before his father-Terah.
  - ii) This paragraph says that Haran had a son Lot. In the next several chapters, we get the impression that Abraham took Lot “under his wings” after his father died.

- c) Reading this section, I can't help getting the feeling of sorrow for both Abraham and his father Terah.
  - i) There is no worse pain for a parent than having one of your children dies before you do. Terah lost one of his three sons (Haran).
  - ii) Of Terah's other two sons, one was Abraham. It says Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children.
  - iii) At this moment in time, Terah must have thought his life was "cursed". To have many descendants is to be blessed by God. Terah probably thought about Noah's prediction of how the descendants of one son Japheth would be "enlarged" (many children) and the other son Shem would have less. Terah is a descendant of Shem.
    - a) Also remember that a promise was made to Adam and Eve of a coming Messiah. "He will bruise your head" (Genesis 3:15) is a reference to the coming redeemer who will bruise Satan's head.
    - b) At this moment in time, it was not known from whom this Messiah would come. I bet Terah thought, "It won't be from my family, or it won't be from Abraham. I lost one son, and my other son is barren".
  - iv) OK John, what's your point? The point is to never lose hope. In the next chapter, we read how the messianic line goes through Abraham, and God performs a "miraculous birth" through Abraham and his wife Sarah. Just when things seem the "gloomiest" for this family is when God does his best work.
    - a) My point is you never know what God's plans are for your life. Even when things seem hopeless or in despair, God may be working out something beyond your expectations.

24. Verse 31: Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. <sup>32</sup> Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

- a) It may be helpful for these verses to look at a map.
  - i) To keep it simple, Terah, took Abraham, his wife Sarai (later renamed Sarah) and his grandson Lot and moved from "Ur" to "Haran". They moved from a location in (today) Southern Iraq to (today) Northern Iraq. Archeologists have discovered at Haran was a major city at that time.
- b) It is best to read these verses in context of the New Testament. Listen to what Stephen said about this incident in Acts Chapter 7:
  - i) The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' (Acts 7:2-3 NIV)
  - ii) Back in Genesis, we read of Abraham, along with his father, his wife and his nephew moving from "Ur" to "Haran".
  - iii) Therefore, we now know that when God called Abraham to go to "Israel", he only went "half-way". He stayed with his father and nephew until his father died.
    - a) We get "clues" here as early as Genesis 11 that Abraham had his own "lapses of faith" and did not fully obey God's plans for him. God was patient and waited for Abraham's father to pass away before God told Abraham to "get moving". We'll read about this in the next chapter.
- c) This also makes you wonder what happened to Abraham's other brother Nahor. Nahor didn't go along with the family move. We don't read any more about Nahor, just of his descendants in Genesis 22. Abraham's son Isaac married a daughter of Nahor.

- d) Also note that Abraham wife Sarah was also Abraham's half-sister. We learn this in Genesis 20:12. Terah had another wife who bore him his daughter Sarai (Sarah).
  - i) Remember in these days, it was acceptable to marry a half-sister or a cousin. The population was still growing, and God allowed it at that time in order to spread the population. By the time of Moses, this practice became outlawed as the gene pool was getting more corrupt.
25. Good news folks, you have made it through the first major "section" of Genesis, which is from Adam to Abraham.
- a) If you can handle the Genesis so far, the rest is "downhill".
  - b) A lot of what we learn from Adam to Abraham's father is based on subtle clues in the text and short narratives. From hereon in, we get a lot more details.
  - c) As usual, I'm running long, so I'll go to the ending prayer.
26. Let's pray. Heavenly father, we thank you for these lessons about the early history of mankind. Help us to glean what you want us to learn by them. Further, help us to apply to our lives the lessons and word-pictures you want us to see from them. Help us to continue to have a strong appetite for your Word, and keep us close to you. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

## Appendix – Maps of the Table of Nations

## Map #1



### Map #2 (Notice the Variation among the scholars)

Red: From Japheth; Blue: from Shem; Yellow: from Ham



### GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF NOAH

