

Week #: 9 Text: Genesis 10:1 – 11:32 Title: Table of Nations & the Tower of Babel
Songs: Here I Am to Worship
Heart of Worship
Videos: _____

Table of Nations

This account proves to be significant on a number of levels.

- Certainly from the **standpoint of history** it provides the only accurate account of the origin of so many of the ancient nations. There is no parallel to this document in the archives of any other ancient people. This is a unique list. Genesis is the Book of Beginnings.
- This chapter serves as important preparation for the account of the **Tower of Babel**; chaps. 10-11 must be studied as a unit. Chiastic structure with Tower of Babel between 2 accounts of the Sons of Shem; look at the **keywords** in chap. 10 that anticipate the events of the Tower of Babel: territory, earth, divided, spread, languages; scattered
- Maybe of primary importance, this chapter speaks to the **global perspective of God's program for mankind** – He is not just the God of Israel; He has always been interested in a salvation program that would encompass all people, everywhere – in fact the mission of Israel was to bring blessing to the Gentiles throughout the world

Ps. 2:8 *"Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance and the very ends of the earth as Your possession."*

Structural Elements:

- There's a **common refrain** in **5, 20, 31** – a growing diversity of ethnic, linguistic, geographical and political groupings
- Summaries at **vv. 5, 20, 32**, and in particular the terms *"families, tongues, lands, nations."* This expression is echoed later in scripture:
 - Pagan kings use it to claim their worldwide dominion: Nebuchadnezzar in **Dan 4:1**; Darius in **Dan 6:25**. They are the heirs of the spirit of Nimrod – Mighty warriors on the face of the earth who rebel against God and seek dominion for themselves
 - But the Lord shows Daniel that this dominion rightly belongs only to the Son of Man, who must receive it; **Dan 7:13-14**, the only one who can exercise his *"might"* "before the Lord."
 - This is fulfilled in **Rev. 5:9, 7:9; 11:9**.
- **Numerical symmetry**
 - Actually, however, this Table of Nations has carefully structured symmetries. For example, when we add up the nations that came from Noah's sons, we discover that they total seventy – another example of the multiples of sevens, tens, and seventies that we have seen so often in Genesis. Here it suggests **totality** – all the nations of the earth.
 - Look at **Gen. 46:27** – 70 sons of Jacob end up going down into Egypt – quite the parallel
 - Waltke calls it a parallel microcosm to the macrocosm of the table of the nations;
 - God never intended to be portrayed as only the God of Israel; He is the God of all the nations
- **Difference between totality and completeness:**
 - Selective record — there is no attempt at **completeness** in the list. Several of the more modern nations which came later into close contact with Israel, as Moab, Ammon, Edom, Amalek, find no mention here, while on the other hand not all the most ancient of the nations are included.

“Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.”

- A new **toledot**, generation section begins here [10:32 gives us another one; 11:10, 27]
 - This is an example of the characteristic, already mentioned, of dealing with collateral branches first, and only after that considering the main stream in the descendants of Shem. This table of nations shows their kinship with the chosen race, out of which all spiritual blessing is to become. Then the nations are dismissed from the Scripture record, and attention concentrated on the Semitic line.
- The God who chose Israel is the sovereign god over all the nations
- The 3 sons of Noah produce 3 distinct lines of nations

Sons of Japheth – Outer Extremities – Gentiles (14 nations) (10:2-5) *“The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.”*

- They lived mostly to the north and east of Canaan and spoke the Indo-European languages.
 - Gomer dwelt north of the Caspian Sea.
 - Tubal and Meshech settled around the southern shores of the Black Sea.
 - Tiras lived west of the Black Sea in Thrace.
 - Madai occupied the area south of the Caspian in what became Media.
 - Javan populated Ionia, the southern part of Greece.
 - The sons of Javan spread around the northern Mediterranean as far west as Tarshish or southern Spain.
- All the maritime coastlands and island areas surrounding the Mediterranean
- This early reference to *“the nations”* is very significant and shows that amid all the Jewish exclusiveness the Old Testament never loses sight of the great fact of universality and God’s purposes for all the world.

*“From these the coastlands of the nations were **separated** into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.”*

- The closing summary differs from the other two by emphasizing *“the isles of the Gentiles,”* literally *“coasts of the Gentiles.”* Most of the nations whom the Israelites thought of as coastal nations were Japhethite. Their interactions with Hamites and Shemites were more often by way of land, at least until the time of Solomon’s voyages on the Red Sea.

Sons of Ham – Powerful Enemies of Israel (30 nations) (:6-20)

- Sons of Ham [2 bookends – vs. 20]

“And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.”

- Ham’s four sons settled primarily in northeast Africa and Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and Southern Arabia. Cush populated the territory of the upper Nile south of Egypt.
- No tracing of the line of Put; most of emphasis is on Cush via Nimrod and Canaan

Sons of Cush and Mizraim (:7-14)

- Sons of Cush and Raamah (:7) *“And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.”*
 - Arabian nations
- Kingdom of Cush (:8-12) *“Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.’ And the*

beginning of his kingdom was **Babel** and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built **Nineveh** and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

- **Nimrod's** leadership role at the Tower of Babel; name means "We shall rebel"
 - Father of **Babylonians and Assyrians**
 - Connected back to 6:4- "mighty hunter before the Lord" is not positive – not only a tyrant, but violent and oppressive
 - He is a city builder – godly line builds altars
 - **Question:** Why is he said to rebel?
 - **Answer:** Civil government is one of the two forces that have always been opposed to God; the other being organized religion. People are not content to live directly under God's rule, but insist on setting themselves up over one another.
 - **Question:** How was he first *gibbor*?
 - **Answer:** He was the first to exalt himself above others and organize political structures. The earlier giants had simply exalted themselves individually (6:4) and filled the earth with violence (6:11). Nimrod organizes people to legitimize this grasp for power. Compare Isa 3:2, which lists the *gibbor* as the first of the various people involved in leading a country successfully.
 - **Question:** Why the emphasis on his skill in the hunt?
 - **Answer:** Ancient rulers boasted of their skill in the chase to show their courage, and their ability to protect the people from wild beasts.
- Babylon henceforward stands for everything that is godless, and for the great opponent of the people of God.
 - The world often exalts those who are leaders in rebelling against God and against His program of redemption; don't be impressed by what impresses the world; seek to glorify and exalt the God who is sovereign over all

Sons of Mizraim (Egypt) (:13-14) "And Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the **Philistines**) and Caphtorim."

Sons of Canaan and Their Territory (:15-19)

- Sons of Canaan(:15-18a) "And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite;"
 - Esau marries a Hethite;
 - Jebusite – associated with city of David and with Jerusalem = place of the Jebusites
- Their Territory(:18b-19) "and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. And the territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha."
- Remember the oracle of Noah that the sons of Canaan would end up serving the sons of Japheth and of Shem – doesn't happen right away ... it may appear like the godless have the supremacy, but in the end they will not be on the throne

Sons of Ham – Diversity Refrain (:20) "These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations."

Sons of Shem – Root of God's Elect People (26 nations) (:21-31) "And also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram."

- The Semitic peoples

Sons of Aram (:23) "And the sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash."

Sons of Arpachshad and Their Territory (:24-30)

- Shelah and Eber (:24) *“And Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.”*
 - The name *Eber* is related to the word *Hebrew* – so that Eber is understood to be the ancestor of the Hebrew people.
- Sons of Eber – Peleg and Joktan (:25) *“And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was **Peleg**, for in his days the earth was **divided**; and his brother’s name was Joktan.”*
 - Name means division
- Sons of Joktan (:26-30) *“And Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah and Obal and Abimael and Sheba and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.”*

The Tower of Babel

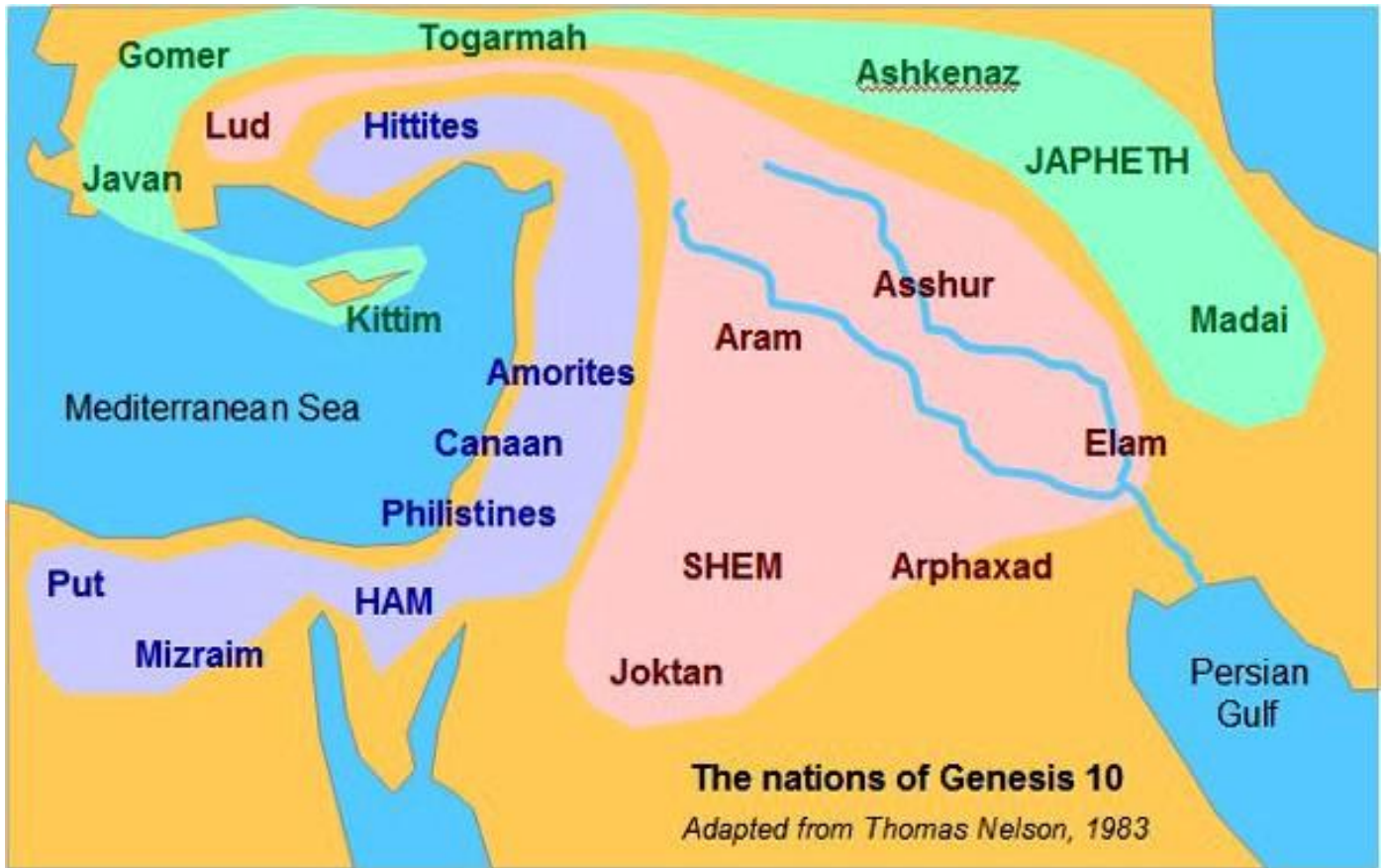
God divided (Gen 10:5)

- Tongues
- Families
- Nations
 - Japheth – 14 kids and grandkids
 - Europeans
 - Ham – 31 kids and grandkids
 - Egypt and African
 - Shem – 29 kids and grandkids
 - Oriental and Middle Eastern
 - Total of about 70-75 nations and languages present at the tower of babel.
 - English, German and Danish are common languages.
 - Spanish, Italian, French, Latin are common root languages
 - Ukrainian and Russian are similar
 - Ancient Chinese was pictographs that were mostly based on the Biblical accounts in Genesis, such as:
 - Boat = vessel + eight + person
 - Garden = dust + breath + two people in an enclosure
 - Righteous = hand + lance/knife + I/me + lamb
 - Covet/Desire = tree + tree + woman
 - Trouble = tree + garden enclosure
 - Heaven/God = above + noble, great person
 - 1200 recognized languages today, plus thousands of dialects.
 - It only takes a few generations for a dialect to change the basic form almost completely in a language. For instance, in America we say a napkin is what you would wipe your mouth with when you eat. Yet in England, and in Australia, the word is serviette. Napkin there refers to what we call a baby’s diaper. This change happened in a matter of just a few hundred years. Dialects form over short periods of time very easily.
 - Acts 17:26 – *“And hath made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”*

1899-1917 – discovery of the ancient city of Babylon

- 1902: a series of lectures were conducted called “Babel and the Bible”. This lecture series was attended by the European Kaiser.
- 600 b.c. – Nebuchadnezzar built one of the biggest and greatest cities of all time. It was called one of the marvels of the world.
- Bricks found of the ancient city of Babylon. They are now in the Metropolitan Museum and the British Museum.
- Ishtar Gate: glazed blue bricks
- Etemananki- Nebuchadnezzar tore down and rebuilt the city of Babylon, except for this ziggurat. He did not tear it down and rebuild it, instead he restored it and built it up again. It is said to be in the area of Shinar. It was covered with bitumen and bricks.
- Shinar was where the Tower of Babel is said to be in Genesis. This word is not used again until Nebuchadnezzar used it for the ziggurat.
- Nebuchadnezzar put a temple on top of the Etemanaki, with glazed blue bricks. It was the temple to Marduk and his wife. An inscription was found in it to reveal that this temple at the top was called the “Holy of Holies”.
- 90 meters high. As tall as the Pyramids of Giza. 7 levels high, with staircases said to go to heaven on each level. Tallest building in the world until the Iron Age. There were 1197 temples in Babylon, and this one was the most magnificent.
- Cylinder of Nabonidus: discovered in 1854.
 - Nabonidus is the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, father of Belshazzar.
 - Lists the name “Belshazzar”. Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson. He used the vessels from the Temple for his drunken party. As soon as the vessels touch their lips, the city is doomed.
 - Nabonidus writes of his son Belshazzar going too far off track. He says “sin possesses him”.
- Dead Sea Scrolls:
 - Aramaic fragment found on which was written the prayer of Nabonidus, telling about a skin disease he had until he was told to give honour to the name of the Lord Most High to be healed.
 - Dan. 3:26; 5:18, 21 reveals that Nebuchadnezzar says God Most High is the God of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- These archaeological finds all confirm the Biblical accounts.
- Nelson Glueck – archaeologist with over 1500 individual digs throughout the Middle East, said, “As a matter of fact, however, it may be clearly stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”

Map of Table of Nations – Genesis 10



City of Babylon as built by King Nebuchadnezzar



Genesis 10 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

Here is the genealogy of the sons of Noach — Shem, Ham and Yefet; sons were born to them after the flood.

² The sons of Yefet were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Yavan, Tuval, Meshekh and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Rifat and Togarmah. ⁴ The sons of Yavan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.

⁵ From these the islands of the nations were divided into their lands, each according to its language, according to their families, in their nations.

⁶ The sons of Ham were Kush, Mitzrayim, Put and Kena'an. ⁷ The sons of Kush were S'va, Havilah, Savta, Ra'mah and Savt'kha. The sons of Ra'mah were Sh'va and D'dan.

⁸ Kush fathered Nimrod, who was the first powerful ruler on earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before *ADONAI* — this is why people say, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before *ADONAI*." ¹⁰ His kingdom began with Bavel, Erekh, Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shin'ar. ¹¹ Ashur went out from that land and built Ninveh, the city Rehovot, Kelach, ¹² and Resen between Ninveh and Kelach — that one is the great city.

¹³ Mitzrayim fathered the Ludim, the 'Anamim, the L'havim, the Naftuchim, ¹⁴ the Patrusim, the Kasluchim (from whom came the P'lishtim) and the Kaftorim.

¹⁵ Kena'an fathered Tzidon his firstborn, Het, ¹⁶ the Y'vusi, the Emori, the Girgashi, ¹⁷ the Hivi, the 'Arki, the Sini, ¹⁸ the Arvadi, the Tz'mari and the Hamati. Afterwards, the families of the Kena'ani were dispersed. ¹⁹ The border of the Kena'ani was from Tzidon, as you go toward G'rar, to 'Azah; as you go toward S'dom, 'Amora, Admah and Tzvoyim, to Lesha.

²⁰ These were the descendants of Ham, according to their families and languages, in their lands and in their nations.

²¹ Children were also born to Shem, ancestor of all the descendants of 'Ever and older brother of Yefet. ²² The sons of Shem were 'Elam, Ashur, Arpakhshad, Lud and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram were 'Utz, Hul, Geter and Mash. ²⁴ Arpakhshad fathered Shelach, and Shelach fathered 'Ever. ²⁵ To 'Ever were born two sons. One was given the name Peleg [division], because during his lifetime the earth was divided. His brother's name was Yoktan. ²⁶ Yoktan fathered Almodad, Shelef, Hatzar-Mavet, Yerach, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ 'Oval, Avima'el, Sheva, ²⁹ Ofir, Havilah and Yovav — all these were the sons of Yoktan. ³⁰ Their territory stretched from Meshu, as you go toward S'far, to the mountain in the east.

³¹ These were the descendants of Shem, according to their families and languages, in their lands and in their nations. ³² These were the families of the sons of Noach, according to their generations, in their nations. From these the nations of the earth were divided up after the flood.

Genesis 11 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

The whole earth used the same language, the same words. ² It came about that as they traveled from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shin'ar and lived there. ³ They said to one another, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them in the fire." So they had bricks for building-stone and clay for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city with a tower that has its top reaching up into heaven, so that we can make a name for ourselves and not be scattered all over the earth."

⁵ *ADONAI* came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ *ADONAI* said, "Look, the people are united, they all have a single language, and see what they're starting to do! At this rate, nothing they set out to accomplish will be impossible for them! ⁷ Come, let's go down and confuse their language, so that they won't understand each other's speech." ⁸ So from there *ADONAI* scattered them all over the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ For this reason it is called Bavel [confusion] — because there *ADONAI* confused the language of the whole earth, and from there *ADONAI* scattered them all over the earth.

¹⁰ Here is the genealogy of Shem. Shem was 100 years old when he fathered Arpakhshad two years after the flood. ¹¹ After Arpakhshad was born, Shem lived another 500 years and had sons and daughters.

¹² Arpakhshad lived thirty-five years and fathered Shelach. ¹³ After Shelach was born, Arpakhshad lived another 403 years and had sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Shelach lived thirty years and fathered 'Ever. ¹⁵ After 'Ever was born, Shelach lived another 403 years and had sons and daughters.

¹⁶ 'Ever lived thirty-four years and fathered Peleg. ¹⁷ After Peleg was born, 'Ever lived another 430 years and had sons and daughters. ¹⁸ Peleg lived thirty years and fathered Re'u. ¹⁹ After Re'u was born, Peleg lived another 209 years and had sons and daughters.

²⁰ Re'u lived thirty-two years and fathered S'rug. ²¹ After S'rug was born, Re'u lived another 207 years and had sons and daughters. ²² S'rug lived thirty years and fathered Nachor. ²³ After Nachor was born, S'rug lived another 200 years and had sons and daughters. ²⁴ Nachor lived twenty-nine years and fathered Terach. ²⁵ After Terach was born, Nachor lived another 119 years and had sons and daughters.

²⁶ Terach lived seventy years and fathered Avram, Nachor and Haran. ²⁷ Here is the genealogy of Terach. Terach fathered Avram, Nachor and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died before his father Terach in the land where he was born, in Ur of the Kasdim.

²⁹ Then Avram and Nachor took wives for themselves. The name of Avram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nachor's wife was Milkah the daughter of Haran. He was the father of Milkah and of Yiskah. ³⁰ Sarai was barren — she had no child. ³¹ Terach took his son Avram, his son Haran's son Lot, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Avram's wife; and they left Ur of the Kasdim to go to the land of Kena'an. But when they came to Haran, they stayed there. ³² Terach lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.