

Lesson: The Nations of the World and the Rise of God’s Nation Pt.1

God chose Noah for a purpose. God used him and his children to fulfill his command of multiplying humanity. God commanded Adam and Eve to do that and now God commanded Noah to do the same (Gen 1:28; 9:1). As the world continued to increase in population, it spread various places and became increasingly diverse. Genesis 10 explores both the relatedness of humanity and its diversity. But Genesis 11 focuses on the hubristic unity of humanity and centers on the rise of one particular nation whom God would use to save the world. The story of Genesis after chapter 11 places our attention on the origin story of the nation of Israel who would be the means through which God blesses all of the nations.

Biblical Takeaways (10:1-11:32)

1. *Noah’s sons* (10:1): The names Shem, Ham, and Japheth are written in their respective order. Shem is the oldest. Gen 10 gives an outline and overview of the spread of the nations. It does not historically precede Gen 11. The events of Gen 11 are prior and concurrent to the spread of the descendants of Noah.
2. *The diversity of the nations* (10:2-32)
 - a. *Japheth*: The genealogy begins with Japheth. Since Shem and his children are the focal point of the story, the writer begins with the people farthest from Shem in distance and culture and then concludes with Shem. Japheth’s descendants would become the ancestors of Europe and parts of Asia.
 - b. *Ham*: The descendants of Ham are closer to Shem and populate the Afro-asiatic region of the world. Black and brown peoples are said to be the descendants of Ham. Several of his children, including Cush, Egypt, and Canaan would become essential to the biblical story. Interestingly, the story takes an aside to note Nimrod. He was a great hunter before God and the founder of Babel and other prominent cities in what would become Assyria/Babylon.
 - c. *Shem*: Shem (where we get the word “semitic”) is the “father of all the children of Eber” where we get the word, Hebrew. Eber, his son, is the father of Joktan and Peleg. Joktan’s descendants are discussed in Gen 10 while Peleg’s descendants are discussed in Gen 11.
3. The Tower of Babel (11:1-9): Though Gen 10:5, 20, 31, tell us that people and languages were separated, Gen 11:1 says there was a moment when everyone was together and spoke one language. They wanted to build a city and a tower. This tower was likely a ziggurat, which was a tower/temple. They were trying to reach up into heaven to “make a name.” The problem was that no people can reach up to God of their own accord. It takes God to reach God. So, God scattered the people all across the world and confused their language so that they would have to find him through him. This confoundment issue would be addressed at Pentecost.
4. *Shem’s other descendants* (11:10-32): The text notes the length of life shortens after the flood for several people. We are also told about Peleg, which means division (10:25). When God scattered the peoples, he possibly divided the continents. Peleg’s descendant Nahor was the father of Terah and Terah was the father of Abram. Terah’s family was headed to the land of Canaan from Ur but they ended up staying in Haran (11:31). Abram would finish that journey in answer to God’s call.