

“The Spread of the Nations” (Genesis 10:1-11:26)

An airline flight attendant shared the story of a passenger from Bombay, India, on the way to his first visit to the United States. As the man was served, he nodded his head and replied, “From the heart of my bottom, I am thanking you.” The flight attendant learned that this was one of the only English expressions he knew, and was quite proud to say it with every gesture: “From the heart of my bottom, I am thanking you.” The attendant said, “Now, if I were to thank people from the heart of my bottom, I am sure they would be offended. I think what he was trying to say was, ‘from the bottom of my heart,’ but there was no way we could convey to this man that this sentence was wrong. Although we had a fun time trying, I am sure he spent his American tour thanking people from the heart of his bottom.”¹

I love this story...probably because I can relate. In my foreign travels, I’m sure I have said some strange things as well. In Genesis 10:1-11:26, God is going to explain how different languages and nations came into existence. In these 58 verses, we will see our tendency to sin and God’s propensity to provide for His people. Since we have a lot to cover we will be doing an overview of most of this section without focusing on the specific details. As you look at some of these verses, you will thank me for not getting bogged down in the mire of names and details. For example, in 10:17, the descendants of Canaan sound like an entomologist’s list of something for the pest controller—“the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite,” and the termite.² Seriously, since all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16), I believe that these verses will be of great help to us.

[The first truth that we need to see in this passage is...]

1. God made the world one big family (10:1-32). For many, this chapter may seem like a bore that should be skipped. But this chapter provides us much important information:

- It provides us authoritative evidence that the post-flood world descended from one pair of human beings (i.e., Noah and his wife).
- It provides us with a historical accounting of the origins of the nations of the world and how they spread over the face of the earth.
- It provides us with an understanding of the relationship between the people of Israel and all other nations and peoples of the world.
- It provides us with the knowledge of who we are and where we came from.
- It provides us the primitive branches of the genealogical tree of mankind that will eventually culminate in the objective of every biblical genealogy—the person of Jesus Christ.

This chapter is not technically a genealogy (so and so, begat so and so).³ It has been called a table of nations because it traces the connected origins of various nations.⁴ What is striking is that the nations of the world all came from the same place...from one of the three sons of Noah (10:1, 32). In other words, God made us one big family. Though we are of different languages, cultures, and geographical locations, we are still imprinted with the image of God and share in the dignity of human existence. An emphasis on our racial and cultural differences undermines this unity and runs counter to God’s will for us. He basks in our rich cultural diversity and variety, which He has created. We need to learn to do the same.⁵

The descendants of Japheth (10:2-5).⁶ This division of the chapter, centering on Japheth, is the shortest and highlights 14 of Japheth’s descendants.⁷ The Japhethites split into two groups: one group settled in India and the other group in Europe. Together they form what is known as the “Indo-European” family of nations. They became the coastline peoples, the peoples of the Gentiles (10:5). It was primarily into this area of the world that the New Testament church spread, under the apostle Paul. Verse 5 also teaches that the occupation of the lands followed the confusion of tongues at Babel.

The descendants of Ham (10:6-20). Here we have the account of the descants of Ham. The nations connected to Ham inhabited northwestern Africa, the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula, and the Fertile Crescent from Egypt to Mesopotamia.⁸ Some of these nations figured prominently in the biblical story as enemies of Israel, particularly “**Babel**” (Babylon, 10:10),⁹ “**Mizraim**” (Egypt, 10:13), and “**Canaan**” (10:15). But, once again, all these scattered nations were the descendants of Ham, who was one of three brothers, descendants of the one Noah.¹⁰ There is no escaping it: God made the world one big family!

The descendants of Shem (10:21-32). The descendants of Shem (lit. “name”) are the Semitic peoples who inhabited the eastern lands: modern-day Iraq, Iran, and eastern Saudi Arabia. The genealogy of Shem split at the sons of “**Eber**” (10:25).¹¹ From Eber we get the word “Hebrew.” The descendants of Eber’s son “**Joktan**” are given in 10:26-32, while the descendants of his other son, “**Peleg**” are found in Genesis 11. It was Peleg’s line which led to Abraham and eventually to the Israelites (11:18-26).¹² This is the family that God will be dealing with throughout the entire Old Testament. These are the Hebrews, the nation Israel. This section reveals that it was God’s plan to bless the human race by dividing the family of man by languages, locations, and leaders. Remember that God formerly blessed the earth by dividing the light from the darkness, the earth from the heavens, and the land from the seas (Gen 1).

So why is this important? What difference does this unity of the human race make? Well, we do not have the luxury of caring nothing about the rest of the world. They are all our cousins! Their needs, their hopes, their dreams, their problems, their family struggles, their successes, and their failures are really not that much different than ours! All human people, even of different national and cultural identities are of the same origin, have the same dignity, and belong in the same world. This is one of the reasons we are committed to praying for the persecuted church. The church abroad is made up of our distant cousins, our spiritual brothers and sisters. This principle is also why we must continue to pray that the 10/40 window is opened up.¹³ Since God has a heart for the world, so must we. This biblical mentality undercuts all human divisiveness based on nationality, culture, and race. However good, however rich national and cultural diversity can be, it should never be allowed to cloud the more fundamental fact that all human people share the same nature, breathe the same air, live on the same earth, and owe their life to the same God (cf. Acts 17:26).

[Although God made the world one big family...]

2. The world will never enjoy unity apart from Christ (11:1-26). If chapter 10 paints a picture of such a unified world—all the nations descended from a single family—what happened? How did the world become so divided? That’s the point of Genesis 11:1-9. It explains what caused the nations to scatter.¹⁴ This section describes the disunity among Noah’s offspring that resulted from the tower event but did not prevent the blessing God had envisioned for humanity.¹⁵ The actual outworking of the genealogies of Genesis 10 occurs after the events at the Tower of Babel (cf. 11:1 with 10:5, 20, 31). This interspersal of narrative (11:1-9) separates the two genealogies of Shem (10:21-31; 11:10-26), paving the way for the particular linkage between the Terah (Abraham) clan and the Shemite lineage (11:27). The story of the tower also looks ahead by anticipating the role that Abram (12:1-3) will play in restoring the blessing to the dispersed nations.¹⁶ By placing the Tower of Babel incident just prior to the stories of Abram and his descendants, the biblical writer is suggesting, in the first place, that post-flood humanity is as wicked as pre-flood humanity. Rather than sending something as devastating as a flood to annihilate mankind, however, God now places His hope in a covenant with Abraham as a powerful solution to humanity’s sinfulness. This problem (Gen 11) and solution (Gen 12) are brought into immediate juxtaposition, and the forcefulness of this structural move would have been lost had Genesis 10 intervened between the two.¹⁷

This leads right into the Tower of Babel account in 11:1-9. In 11:1, Moses writes, **“Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.”** After the flood, the whole earth spoke the same language. But man’s habitual sin brought about the language barrier.

In 11:2, we read these fateful words: **“It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.”** The word **“east”** is intentionally alluded to in the Scriptures, to let us know that a person or group is moving contrary to God’s will. In the Genesis narratives, when man goes **“east,”** he leaves the land of blessing (Eden and the Promised Land) and goes to a land where the greatest of his hopes will turn to ruin (Babylon and Sodom).¹⁸ Please also notice that they **“settled”** in Shinar. In 9:1, God clearly commanded Noah and his sons to **“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”** (cf. 8:17). There is no reason to suspect that Noah’s descendants did not understand what God wanted. God wanted them to move throughout all the earth but they banded together in order to defy God’s command. They selected the best land that they could find; they staked their claim in the land of Shinar, a place that becomes associated with evil.¹⁹

Now don’t you find it amazing that the people have such short memories? How soon they forget the most horrendous judgments of God (Gen 6-8); they go back to their former ways. They try to defy God. They exert their own will. Now think about this, how must the world still have looked at this time? The worldwide flood had completely destroyed everything. Now it’s only a few generations later, with the ground still displaying the desolations of the deluge and these people want to test God’s hand again. Nothing but the grace of God and work of the Holy Spirit can remove the depravity of the human heart.

In 11:3-4, **“They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’”** The motivation for building a city was to make the builders a name (cf. Ps 14:1). The object of this endeavor was to establish a center by which they might maintain their unity.²⁰ Now God desired unity for humankind, but one that He created, not one founded on a social state. They wanted to **“empower”** themselves. Both motive and object were ungodly. God had instructed man to fill the earth (1:28), to spread over the whole planet. The builders of the **“tower”** seem to have intended that it serve as a memorial or landmark among other things.

Verse 4 makes what might be called the first public declaration of humanism²¹: **“They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name,’²² otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”** This verse reveals three problems. First, man wanted to build a tower that would reach up to the top of the heavens; they wanted to reach God, really to be God themselves. Every generation seems to build towers. Whether they are actual skyscrapers (e.g., the Sears Tower and Tribune Tower in Chicago, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Trump Tower in New York City) or mega corporations that circle the globe, the idea is the same—to be strong and powerful!²³ In the 21st century, people continue to do that. The university professor who dismisses God without a second thought has placed his intellect on the throne instead of God. But human intelligence is woefully inadequate to be our god. Paul asked, **“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”** (1 Cor 1:20) Over and over again the intelligence of man has been supplanted by later intelligence; later proof that other intelligence, more educated, more sophisticated people have destroyed the theories of intelligence of those before them. And if man’s intelligence can be supplanted by other men’s intelligence, how inadequate is it to try to displace God’s intelligence? You cannot build your own tower in your heart or in your head and replace God by doing it. God will not be subject to our folly. The people of the land of Shinar failed in achieving their first goal.

Secondly, they wanted to make a name for themselves.²⁴ They wanted to be remembered. Isn't that true of all of us? Don't you want to be remembered for something good? Not long ago, *Reader's Digest* carried an article on Dr. Henry Heimlich. It's been more than 30 years since the famous "Heimlich Maneuver" has been instituted in saving lives and probably 50,000 choking victims have been saved through Henry Heimlich's maneuver. Well, to this day Heimlich kind of gets a kick out of being a household word. He never anticipated that would be the case. In fact, he said that when his name went into the dictionary, it was quite a big deal for him. He remembers that he immediately looked at the entry for Abraham Lincoln; and Lincoln had only an inch of copy in the dictionary while Henry Heimlich had two inches, because there was a drawing depicting how to perform the maneuver. Interesting isn't it, that with mankind we measure fame in inches in the dictionary? But God measures fame by obedience. What is it you want to be remembered for? What do you want people to remember about you when they think about you after you are gone? What kind of legacy will you leave?

Well the people of Shinar didn't want to be forgotten so they made a tower that we would never forget their names, and by the way, can you name any of them? Do you know a single name of a person who joined this rebel group? Of course you don't! Defiance of God is a quick route to obscurity. You remember Noah, but you don't remember any of these guys. They failed in their second goal.

The third problem revealed in this verse was that they wanted to keep themselves from being scattered over the earth. Now you can read between the lines, obviously, and see that all three of these motivations are designed to defy the will of God. Building a tower, building a city—that's no crime in itself. But the purpose of this tower was to replace the God of the heavens. They wanted to climb into heaven and dethrone God and enthrone themselves instead.

In 11:5-6, the Lord responded: **"The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. The LORD said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.'"** The people of the land of Shinar tried to defy God. They did not want to be scattered all over the face of the earth. Of course, they failed. And when they failed, judgment had to come. Now notice, the Lord says, "I'm going to come down and see." That's an anthropomorphism. It simply means that God did not want to stay in heaven. He wanted to have a good look at what people were doing on earth. God doesn't need to leave heaven to see us here on earth, but He chose to.

In 11:6, God seems worried. This verse, however, is not speaking of technology but of morality. The Lord concludes, "If I let them get away with this, they will stop at nothing." And so, He initiates a judgment to counter their rebellion. The introduction of languages makes this rebellious unity of mankind a practical impossibility.²⁵ God is not threatened by what man might do. On the contrary, God is protecting man from himself! You see, it is in grace that God will not allow the world to enjoy unity on its own terms!

In 11:7, a Trinitarian meeting took place and the Lord said, **"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."** So what was God's plan? His plan was to foil man's sin. Language is a unique tool to communicate; God said, "I want to confuse their language so they have to obey me." This verse is dripping with irony: The descendants of Noah were attempting to elevate themselves to God, but so pathetic are their attempts that God has to come down to see it (see Isa 40:22; Ps 2:4). Had God allowed this project to continue the results would have been even worse than they were at this time. The sin of the builders was their refusal to live within God-given boundaries (Acts 17:24-26). All of the divisions of the whole world are a result of sin and the righteous judgment of God.

In 11:8-9, Moses writes, **“So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.”** The confusion led to a scattering of the people over the “whole earth.” God did not allow human rebellion to reach the level that it had before the flood. God forced people to do what they refused to do voluntarily, namely, scatter over the face of the earth. And as soon as God confused the language, the engineers could not speak to the laborers. The masons could not speak to the city planners. All the work had to stop. By the way, it’s only from the Scriptures that we learn the true origins of the different languages in different nations in the world. By one miracle of tongues man was dispersed and gradually fell from his true religion; and by another, the national barriers were broken down so that men might be brought back to the family of God. What a unique thing language is. But as a result of the confusion of the language, the city’s name became Babel. The city is none other than Babylon.

“Babel” means “confusion” in Hebrew, and “the gate of gods” in Babylonian. This was the original Babylon that forever after was the city most consistently rebellious against God’s government in human history. It stands as a symbol of organized rebellion against God elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Rev 17-18). Babylon has always been a city set in opposition to the true God, whether run by a committee of these rebels or a ruthless dictator like Saddam Hussein. Babel means confusion and the final result of the language being confused was that people were scattered over all the earth. These people forfeited the blessing of God because they decided they could make a better future for themselves than God could make for them.

What we do today is no less foolish than what these nameless rebels did. Somehow we have forgotten that every time we attempt to defy God, we not only see His judgment as a result, but we rob ourselves of God’s blessing. Hey, learn this today. Learn it from the people of Babel. Obedience means blessing. Disobedience means judgment and a loss of blessing. How much clearer can that truth be than is illustrated by these events at the Tower of Babel?²⁶

The story of Babel is important for several reasons:

- It explains the beginning of and reason for the various languages of mankind.
- It probably explains the origin of the “races” within humankind. The separate language groups no longer could intermarry freely with the rest of mankind. As inbreeding and lack of access to the larger pool of genes occurred, ethnic characteristics developed. Furthermore, each local environment tended to favor selection of certain traits, and eliminate others.

Ethnic characteristics, such as skin color, arose from loss of genetic variability, not from origin of new genes through mutation, as suggested by evolution. The concept of race is an evolutionary idea (Acts 17:26). All humans possess the same color, just different amounts of it. We all descended from Noah and Adam. The Bible doesn’t tell us what skin color our first parents had but from a design point of view, the “middle color” makes a great beginning. Starting with medium-skinned parents, it would take only one generation to produce all the variation we see in human skin color today. In fact, this is the normal situation in India at present. Some Indians are as dark as the darkest Africans, and some—perhaps a brother or sister in the same family—as light as the lightest Europeans. There are families from India that included members with every major skin color you could see anywhere in the world.

- It demonstrates the inclination of fallen man to rebel against God and to try to provide for his needs in his own way rather than by trusting and obeying God.²⁷ It illustrates that rebellion against God results in (a) broken fellowship between God and man, and (b) failure to realize God's intention for man in His creation, namely, that man rule the earth effectively.
- It provides the historical background for what follows in Genesis. Abraham came from this area.
- God is jealous. He wants to be worshipped. Yet, all too often, we would rather build a name for ourselves.
- God is wise. He is able to thwart man's attempts to dethrone Him and worship false gods.
- God is righteous. He judges man by separating him. Irony is seen in the beginning and the ending of this passage. The group at Babel began as the whole earth (11:1), but now they were spread over the whole earth (11:9). By this time the lesson is clarified: God's purpose will be accomplished in spite of the arrogance and defiance of man's own purposes. He brings down the proud, but exalts the faithful.
- In the building of the tower we see man's desire to reach God in his own way. Man's desire was a return to Adam and Eve's effort to become like God (3:5).
- In the effort to build a city, we see our lust for the power that comes through corporate control.

We live in dangerous times. The lessons of Babel have been forgotten. Arrogant leaders dare to do anything in the world today. And people excitedly jump on the bandwagon. And it seems that nothing whips up enthusiasm as much as some grandiose plan to unify all mankind into some great, worldwide empire. Think of the organizations that work to such an end: The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and NATO. And, there are so many others with similar agendas. But here, God makes very clear that the world will never enjoy real unity, except when they know it in Christ Jesus.

[Now, I know, you don't see anything about Jesus here. But please consider the last section of the text.]

In 11:10-26,²⁸ we find a more thorough genealogy of Shem. This list of names isn't riveting reading, but it moves you from Noah's son Shem through the events of Babel and the scattering of the nations to Abram (Abraham), the "father" of the chosen people.²⁹ The great former pastor, Ray Stedman, calls this passage "God's Funnel" because it leads us right to Abram.³⁰

Now we are told almost nothing along the way! But that is no accident! For the hope that we seek, the unity which man cannot find on his own, will only be revealed when we get to God's covenant promises made to Abram. ("...all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you!") So why waste any time on lesser things? The text just puts us on the genealogical escalator and takes us right to the top floor!³¹

Moses promises ultimate unity—blessing on the whole world through Abram and his seed! It is a promise that is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus the Messiah! Jesus comes as the only Mediator between God and man and brings us peace with God, through His death and resurrection. He also breaks down the dividing walls between us, making us brothers and sisters in Christ! Through faith in Jesus we become the true sons and daughters of God, part of the new race that will populate the earth for all eternity!

One of America's favorite pastimes is baseball. When a player takes his turn at bat, he steps up to home plate gripping his bat firmly in hand. The pitcher throws the ball toward him, and he swings at the ball. If he misses, that's strike one. The pitcher then throws the ball again, and the batter takes another swing. If he misses a second time, that's strike two. When the ball is thrown the third time and the batter swings and misses, that's strike three, and he's out. He has lost the opportunity to score for his team.

In some ways, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are like a baseball game. The world of humanity represented by Adam and Eve is the batter who stepped up to home plate for the first time in the garden of Eden. The ball—the opportunity to live forever in a right, loving relationship with the Creator and so possess the fullness of His blessing—was thrown. But through man's choice to disobey God, the world of humanity missed, and that was strike one.

In Noah's day, humanity was back up to bat. The same ball—the opportunity to live in a right relationship with the Creator and receive His full, personal blessing—was thrown. This time the world chose to disregard God, and that was strike two.

Chapter 11 of Genesis describes the third time the world of humanity came up to bat. The same ball was thrown at the world. Again, the world swung and missed. To use baseball terminology, we struck out. But this time, God responds differently...He sends Abram whose seed would eventually bring the Messiah.³² Truly, God is a God of grace. Instead of sending us to the dugout, He grants us grace. God is certainly a God of justice and judgment, but in His economy, grace always prevails. Will you trust in His grace today? Will you become a son or daughter of Abraham (Gal 3:6-7)?

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Notes

¹ Preaching Now Vol. 4, No. 3 (1/18/05).

² R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 157.

³ Why does the author give another genealogy at this time? The author's purpose is found in Gen 10:32, "and out of these the nations were separated on earth after the flood." In form this is modified genealogy, and it uses the words "son" and "father" even more flexibly than do the genealogies of Gen 4, 5, and 11. "Son" in Genesis 10 may mean "descendant," "successor," or "nation," and "father" may mean "ancestor," "predecessor," or "founder." In content Gen 10 describes the results of the scattering of mankind at Babel. The genealogy is carefully structured to fit a particular pattern. The number 70 determines the pattern that emerges (Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5; 1 Chron 1:5-23). The number 70 in biblical numerology often is representative of completeness. There were seventy elders selected by Moses and later seventy men served in the Sanhedrin. In both cases, these represented at least in theory the sum of the nation. Significantly, Jesus also chose seventy disciples to preach the Gospel (Luke 10:1), perhaps symbolic of the later missionary efforts of the whole church to reach the whole world. The point in our author's use of the number seventy is "all nations" find their ultimate origins in the three sons of Noah.

⁴ Ross writes, "The table of nations is a 'horizontal' genealogy rather than a 'vertical' one (cf. Gen 5 and 11). Its purpose is not primarily to trace ancestry; instead it shows political, geographical, and ethnic affiliations among tribes for various reasons, most notable being holy war. Tribes shown to be 'kin' would be in league together. Thus this table aligns the predominant tribes in and around the land promised to Israel. These names include founders of tribes, clans, cities, and territories." Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002 [1988]), 42. Wenham comments, "In contrast to the genealogy in chapter 5, chapter 10 has no ages. It contains place and group names, which are spoken of as the ancestors of other places or groups, as well as the names of individuals. God built nations from families. Thus it is quite clearly a selective list, not comprehensive." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15: WBC* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 213.

⁵ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 62.

⁶ The order in which Moses dealt with the three sons of Noah reflects the purpose and the emphasis of Moses. Japheth is dealt with first because he is least important to the theme being developed. Ham is next discussed because of the important part the Canaanites played in the history of Israel. Shem is mentioned last because he is the principle person of the chapter. He is the one through whom the "seed of the woman" will come (cf. Gen 3:15). The godly line will be preserved through Shem.

⁷ In all genealogical lists, the author has a pattern and purpose in what he includes and excludes. In this case, the author's pattern of selection is clearly discernible in the list of the sons of Japheth. Fourteen names are listed in all: seven sons of Japheth (10:2), the seven grandsons (10:3-4). The author has omitted five of Japheth's seven sons and listed only the sons of Gomer and Javan (10:3-4). Thus the intention of the list is not to be exhaustive but representative. This is obtained in the use of the number seven.

⁸ Paul Wright, ed., *Genesis: Shepherd's Notes* (Nashville: Broadman, 1997), 36.

⁹ History is full of the attempts of men to unify the world. Unfortunately, since man is sinful in all his imaginations...All these attempts seek unity without God at the center. In Gen 10:8-12 we read of a man named "Nimrod." Three times he is called "mighty." But Nimrod was not a noble leader. A closer examination of the language seems to indicate that when it says, "he was mighty before the Lord," it means that he was an affront to God! Yes, he was a hunter, but apparently, he was a hunter of men known for his fighting prowess and ruthlessness, as well as his empire building. You see, wicked, rebellious empires, nations that dare to defy God, often begin with an arrogant, rebellious leader. Babel did. And how many more examples are there throughout history?

¹⁰ The division of the peoples of the earth into ethnic, linguistic, and territorial groups is described in Scripture with three distinct Hebrew verbs. The first is *palaq* (10:25) meaning to cleave. While some writers believe this refers to the linguistic separation of families at the tower of Babel, the use of the verb to describe the divisions and as the verbal root of the name *Peleg* suggests it may refer to physical and cataclysmic divisions of the earth on a large scale. Since *Peleg* in Hebrew means "to divide" or "to split," it is more than likely that he received his name in memory of this event. The second Hebrew verb used to describe this division is *parad* (10:5, 32) meaning to divide in judgment. The separation of the peoples at Babel was an act of judgment on the part of God. The third Hebrew verb used by Moses to describe the division of Babel is *nachal* (Deut. 32:8) meaning to divide for an inheritance. This is reflective of the character of God who even in judgment is gracious.

¹¹ As it is presently situated in the text, the account of the founding of Babylon falls at the end of the list of fourteen names from the line of Joktan (10:26-29). At the end of the list of the ten names of Peleg's line, however, is the

account of the call of Abraham (11:27-12:10). So two great lines of the descendants of Shem divide in the two sons of Eber (10:25). One ends in Babylon, the other in the Promised Land. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 134.

¹² Wright, ed., *Genesis: Shepherd's Notes*, 36.

¹³ The core of the unreached people of our world live in a rectangular-shaped window called the 10/40 window, which extends from West Africa to East Asia, from ten degrees north to forty degrees north of the equator. This specific region encompasses the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists—billions of spiritually impoverished souls.

¹⁴ Kaiser writes, "The Bible does not represent itself as always desiring to present its material in a strictly chronological sequence. Often it prefers to present it in a topical sequence. For example, the three temptations of Jesus in the Gospels are found in three different arrangements because the aim of the author was to present them so as to make the preaching and teaching point of theology that each had in mind. Likewise, the writer of Genesis jumps ahead of himself for the moment to describe what happened to the descendants of Noah's three sons, even though it outdistanced the story that he would resume in chapter 11. This technique is typical of the writer of Genesis." Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997 [1996]), Electronic ed.

¹⁵ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1:1-11:26*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 427

¹⁶ Matthews, *Genesis 1:1-11:26*, 428.

¹⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17: NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 347-48.

¹⁸ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis: EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), Electronic ed.

¹⁹ This is the fertile valley that's watered by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It's the perfect center for their union, perfect center for their seat of power. It is modern Iraq today.

²⁰ The construction of cities by itself is not sinful, of course. God chose Jerusalem for His people, and He will create the New Jerusalem for believers to inhabit. It is the pride and security that people place in their cities that God disapproves. The sin was arrogance, rebellion, and pride.

²¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 152.

²² God eventually provides what the builders of Babel sought, "a great name" through Abram (Gen 12:2; cf. 11:4).

²³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Basic: Genesis 1-11* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1998), 138.

²⁴ Later God would "make a name" for Abram (Gen 12:2-3).

²⁵ Albert H. Baylis, *From Creation to the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 69.

²⁶ Woodrow Kroll, "How Not to Make a Name For Yourself": *Back to the Bible Ministries* (<http://www.backtothebible.org/radio/today/24483>: Wednesday, Jan 28, 2004), 4/14/05.

²⁷ Ross writes, "The significance of this little story is great. It explains to God's people how the nations were scattered abroad. Yet the import goes much deeper. The fact that it was Babylon, the beginning of kingdoms under Nimrod from Cush, adds a rather ominous warning: Great nations cannot defy God and long survive. The new nation of Israel need only survey the many nations around her to perceive that God disperses and curses the rebellious, bringing utter confusion and antagonism among them. If Israel would obey and submit to God's will, then she would be the source of blessing to the world. Unfortunately, Israel also raised her head in pride and refused to obey the Lord God. Thus she too was scattered across the face of the earth." Allen P. Ross, "The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138:550 (April-June 1981): 133. See also Sailhamer, *Genesis*.

²⁸ This list of descendants of Shem functions similarly to that of the list of ten descendants of Adam in chapter five. This table shows that the Lord created all peoples (cf. Deut 32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26). As the genealogy in chapter 5, this one traces 10 main individuals, and the last one named had three sons.

²⁹ The genealogy of Shem (Gen 11:10-26) prefaces the story of Abram (11:27-25:11). This structure serves as a prototype for the narrative that follows in Genesis. Similarly the genealogy of Ishmael (25:12-18) introduces the story of Jacob and Esau (25:19-35:29), and the genealogy of Esau (36:1-43) introduces the story of Joseph (37:2-50:26).

³⁰ Stedman writes, "A funnel is an instrument or device for narrowing a flow of liquid or powder from a wide expanse to a narrow one. That is what God is doing here in Genesis 10. Shem is put last of the sons of Noah because God is narrowing the flow of sacred history down to the Semitic races. Shem is the neck of the funnel. God is restricting the stream of humanity that he will deal with personally and directly down to one family group, the family of Shem. In Chapter 11, Verse 10 on to the end of the chapter, he takes this up again and narrows it still further to one man, Abraham. From there it begins to broaden out again to take in Abraham and all his descendants, both physical and spiritual. The rest of the Bible is all about the children of Abraham, physically and spiritually. Here we have then one of the most important links in understanding the Bible." Ray C. Stedman, "God's Funnel": <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/genesis/0331.html>. 4/12/05.

³¹ Albert C. Hitchcock, *Genesis 10:1-11:26: A sermon preached at Wiser Lake Chapel on July 2, 2000:* (http://www.wiserlakechapel.org/images/Sermons/Genesis/Genesis%2010-1_11-6.rtf), 4/14/05.

³² Anne Graham Lotz, *God's Story* (Nashville: Word, 1999 [1997]), 237-238.