

GENESIS

Why The Beginning Matters

Study 10

Bible and Beyond

Genesis 10-11

Part 1 of 4: Spreading of Nations

Genesis 10:1-5 (ESV)

These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

1) a) Objective question. Select the most appropriate. Gen 10:5 says “From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations” but Gen 11:1 says “Now the whole earth had one language and the same words”.

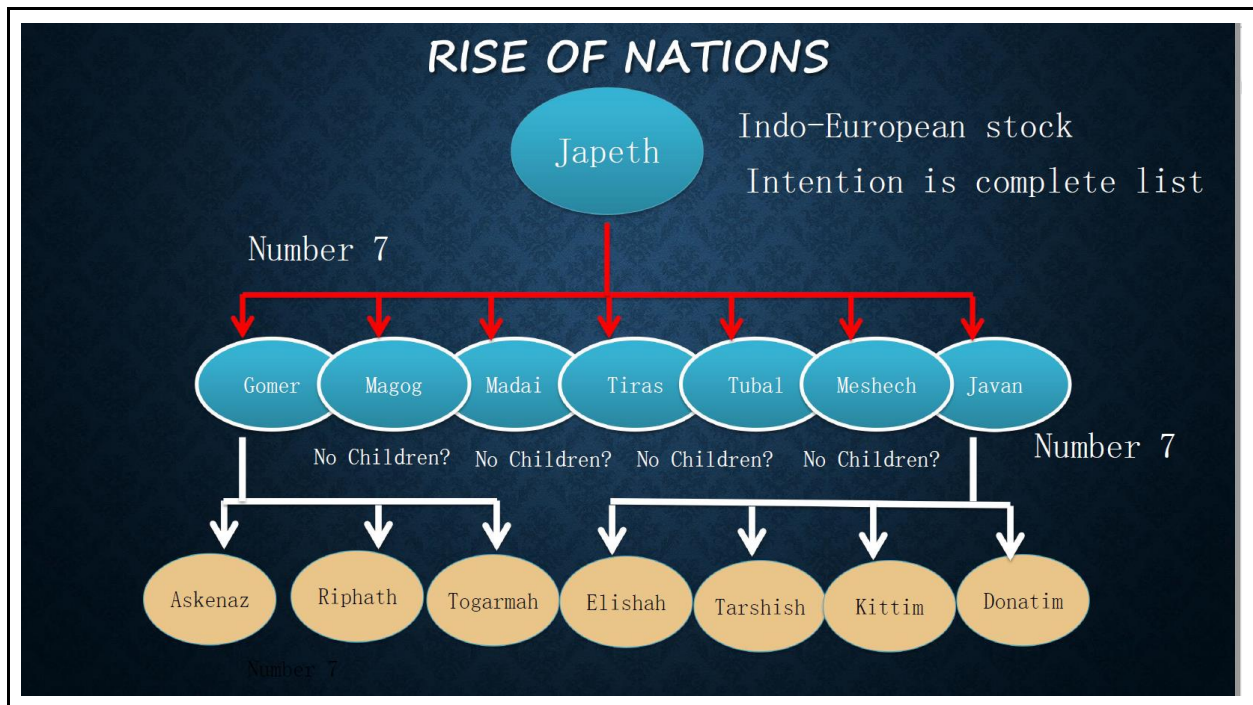
Why is there this seeming contradiction?

A. The author of the book of Genesis wanted to show that the “be fruitful and multiply” instruction in the covenant mentioned in Gen 9:1,7 are carried out instead of writing it in a way to follow the time sequence of events (chronological order). This can be evidenced by Gen10:32 where it says humans “spread abroad on the earth after the flood.”

B. The bible is confused and fake.

b) Discussion question. Why did the verses only name some of the descendants and not all? Were there exactly 7 descendant? What was the point the authors were trying to show? (You may refer to the slides in the box below to help you answer.)

Background information



Genesis 10:6-32(ESV)

The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.

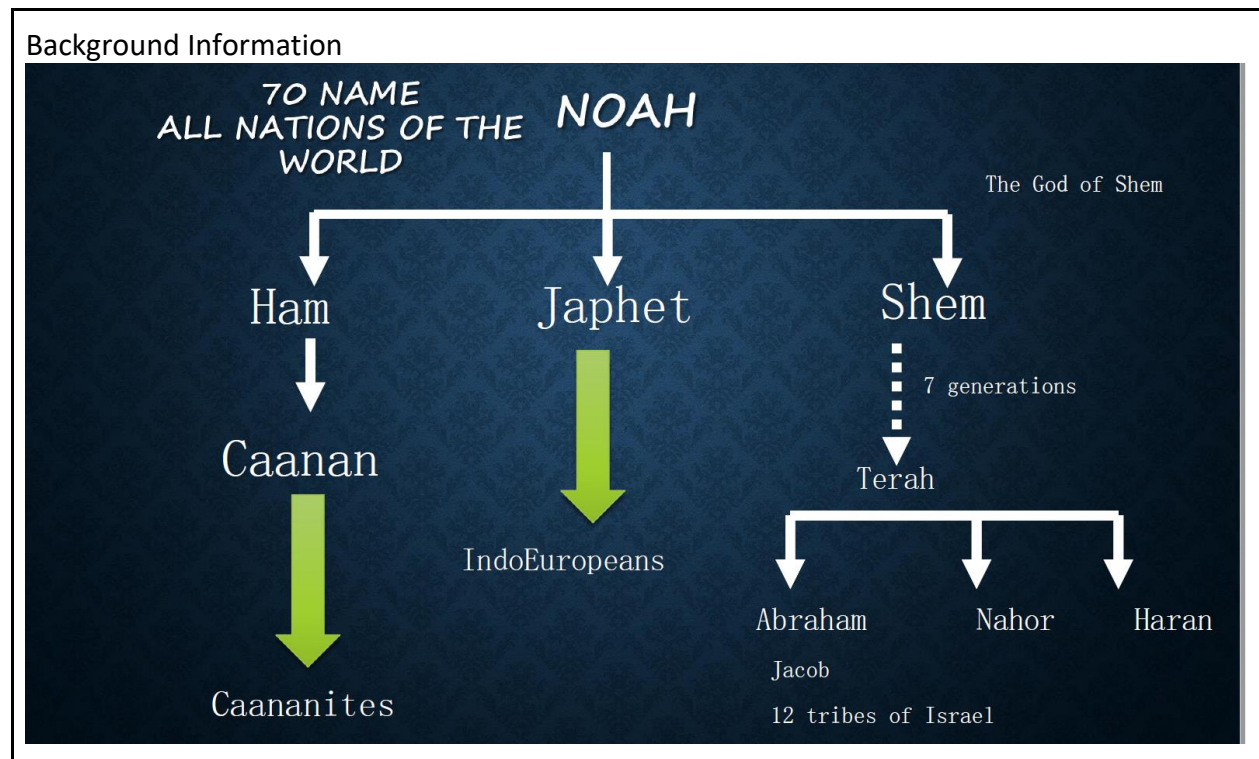
Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided,

and his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

2) a) Reflection question. Gen 10:14 mentioned the origin of Philistines which are modern day Palestinians. How does looking at the genealogy where human beings are all related change the way you think about other races?



Genesis 10:6-32(ESV)

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b) Discussion question. Nimrod is described as a mighty hunter and is the ancestor of a few major empires with dictatorship style: Babel (Babylon), Assyria and Nineveh. (See also Micah 5:6) According to the lecture, was this according to God's will or not? What was the evidence given in the video lecture?

Background Information

Micah 5:6

who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword,
the land of Nimrod with drawn sword.

He will deliver us from the Assyrians

when they invade our land
and march across our borders.

Part 2 of 4: Lesson from Babel

Genesis 11:1-9 (ESV)

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

3) a) Fill in the blanks. Gen 11:4 says "let us make a name for ourselves". According to video lecture, what's in a name?

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b) Reflection question. What is so bad about humans making a name for themselves?

c) Objective question. Select the most appropriate. Gen 11:5 says: And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower". What does this mean?

- A. God literally come onto earth from another place because He cannot see everywhere
- B. It's an ironic language to signify the tower is so small that God have to 'come down' to see it like a human squatting down to see a tiny ant.

Part 3 of 4: Lessons from Babel

3) Objective question. Select all that apply, what are the lessons we can learn from the Babel incident?

- A. The Spirit Restores Unity that was broken at Babel (Acts 2:4-6, 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 7:9)
- B. Building cities and tall building is bad and evil (Gen 11:4-6)
- C. We Need to Maintain the Unity of the Spirit as Christians (Eph 4:1-6)
- D. We Must Work Within Babylon, we are living among evil and people caged, but should be working towards being free from the evil habits (Rev 18:2-3)
- E. Having a common language is bad and evil (Gen 11:6-9)
- F. We Must Have a Vision of God's City, we look forward and put our hopes in the ideal city run by God and God's holy people in the future (Heb 11:8-10)
- G. We Must Believe God's Will for the World Can Never be Thwarted (Isaiah 14:27)

Part 4 of 4: God Chooses His People

Genesis 11:10-26 (ESV)

These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

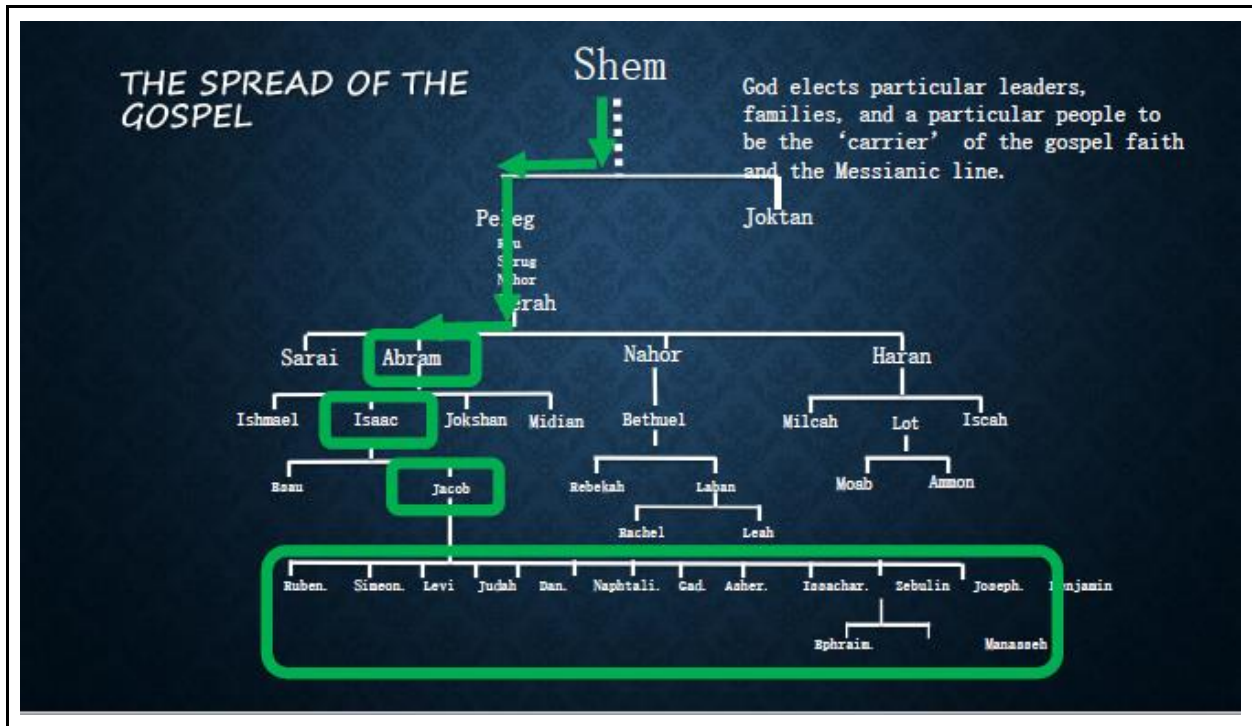
When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

4) Reflection question. God chose Sarai even though she couldn't bear children (Gen 11:30), and multiple descendants such as Tamar and Judah, Ruth and Boaz and David went through situations that could have seemingly 'destroyed' God's plan, either through sin or tragedy. Are there times in your life where you think a sin or situation will prevent God's mission in redeeming u?

Background information



Take Away

Part 1 of 4: Spreading of Nations

Part 2 of 4: Lesson from Babel

Part 3 of 4: Lessons from Babel

1. The Spirit Restores Unity

2. We Need to Maintain the Unity of the Spirit

3. We Must Work Within Babylon

4. We Must Have a Vision of God's City

5. We Must Believe God's Will for the World Can Never be Thwarted

Part 4 of 4: God Chooses His People

Case Study

Case 1 – Church Size

The Second Baptist Church is a growing church in the Kota Kemuning area where the Sunday attendance is about 550 with two congregations. It has to make crucial decisions about the future.

It has either to break up and move out to smaller church plants strategically all over the city

or continue to grow large at the same spot on its current trajectory. Its current building and land can accommodate up to 850 at one sitting. The church has 3-4 good preachers and a similar number of pastoral staff.

One of the pastors prayed over the issue and felt convicted by the Genesis 11 passage and challenged the church to break up into smaller congregations and move into other areas to spread out. This was the biblical model he suggested.

Other leaders were not so sure and felt that there were many advantages in building a larger community in light of the difficulties in getting religious land for churches. Please take into consideration, manpower, political climate, spirituality, etc.

1) a) Discussion question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of remaining small and moving out?

Advantage	Disadvantage

b) Discussion question. What are the spiritual pitfalls and dangers of option 2, the mega-church concept taking into consideration what we have learned about the spirit of Babel in Genesis 11?

Model Answer

The danger is the availability of resources will lull the members into a false sense of security trusting their own skills and talents to build the church.

The sheer size of the church will tempt the leaders into pride by making a name for themselves in building a large church. They will tend to forget the wider kingdom mentality.

c) Discussion question. Is the pastor right in applying the Genesis 11 passage as a paradigm for church planting?

Model Answer

The answer is both Yes and No.

Firstly, no in the sense that the Genesis 11 passage historically applies to the mandate for mankind to spread out and multiply and fill the earth to exert dominion over creation as

God's representative when the population coverage of the earth was much less dense than it is today. It cannot be applied directly as God's command for the way the church is to operate.

Yes in the sense that as humans are ultimately spread out all over the globe, the church too is to maintain a presence as far and as wide as mankind is spread out as the church is to make disciples. That's why in Acts the gospel is to spread out from Judea then to Samaria and then to the ends of the world. How the church does this in this current digital age and megacities is left to the church and its wisdom guided by the Holy Spirit.

Case 2 – Babel vs Pentecost

Please read Acts 2:1-13 which describes the Pentecost experience and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-13

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

2) a) Discussion question. Compare this with the Babel experience and draw parallels between the two. Consider these factors:

Factors	Babel	Pentecost
a) Whose glory do they seek?		

b) Whom do they trust?		
c) What is the role of language?		
d) Peace or chaos?		
e) Men were spread all over the world in both. How do they differ in terms of the reason?		

b) Discussion question. Discuss what spiritual lessons we can learn from comparing both.

Case 3 – Making our own “god”

Molly and her partner Chris left the Third Baptist Church after worshipping there for 7 years and joined the New Wineskin church in Klang even though it was a 45-minute drive away.

The reason she gave was that the church had very lively worship which she thoroughly enjoyed and came home singing. On a Sunday they have regular prayer for the sick and for people who need better jobs. Since she joined them she has already gotten a double promotion at work and her arthritis was much better now.

The leaders there never nag her about attending bible studies or discipleship groups. She said that there were special services where the leaders teach them to exercise their prophetic gifts and other gifts like healing or speaking in tongues. Since she joined them, she has acquired the gift of speaking in tongues and prophecy. She is pleased with this church as it is practical without any of those boring bible studies, they teach her how to live her life in victory by appropriating God’s power.

Chris her partner (they are not married but living together) is also quite impressed even though he is not a Christian because the church is so open-minded. The pastor there actually encourages transcendental meditation and yoga which has ministered to Molly a lot. Gay people are not pressured to give up their lifestyle, they are just loved.

Since joining this new church, God has become more accepting and caring and more loving to her. The church emphasizes grace based on Jesus' finished work on the cross. There is no focus on guilt or character change.

3) a) Discussion question. Why is Molly so happy with this new church?

b) Discussion question. In what way can this church operate in the spirit of Babel even though they are an evangelical church?

Model Answer

The people of Babel wanted a god they could handle, not one that handled them. They constructed their own versions of god. Their gods would cater to their whims and needs and enable them to build their own name, their own reputations, and lives. Molly's enthusiasm for this church centers mainly on how this church makes her happy and fulfills her needs. The worship is lively and makes her feel good. There is no mention if the worship makes God feel good. The ministry caters to many aspects of her life that would help her become more successful. The exercise of gifts in itself is not wrong but can become a proxy for feeling close to God in wielding power.

There is no mention of the fidelity to God's word, the truth has been shoved aside here and God is diminished and shares power with transcendental meditation and yoga. This church places no demands on her attitudes or habits.

c) Discussion question. Why do churches like the New Wineskin operate in this manner?

Model Answer

There are many reasons but they often boil down to adopting a consumer attitude to gain more of a crowd which will increase revenue and influence as well as bolster self-esteem.

d) Discussion question. What central features in your mind are the most important in a good church?

Case 4 – Racism and Unity of the Spirit

Sum Ting Wong is a Chinese believer in the All Nations Church. She and her husband have a daughter who is growing up well in Sunday School.

The church accommodates the international community, including people from the United States, Europe, and Africa.

Sum Ting Wong instructs her daughter to mix only with the "ang mohs" and avoid the Africans as she thinks that this will increase her daughter's chances of having a successful future (since the Western economies are more advanced).

She reasons that since God made many nations in Genesis 11 and chose the line of Seth, we too should be prudent about which nationalities and races we mix with.

4) a) Discussion question. Is Sum Ting Wong's thinking correct? Why or why not?

Model Answer

We must not think that the separation of races and cultures is good in itself. There are some who have taken Genesis 11 to mean that the races and cultures should not mix or associate, that it leads to evil. But surely that is missing the whole point — that the disunity of the human race was a punishment, something that was the result of sin. Disunity is clearly, then, a distortion of God's original will for us. The loss of community due to our pride is a terrible loss, and it is not what God wants.

b) Discussion question. You have just attended a study on Acts 2 at Gamma about Pentecost and how all races were united as one. How would you correct Sum Ting Wong?

Model Answer

Here we see another "Table of Nations". It almost seems unnecessary. Why is Luke giving us such a long, tedious list? He is deliberately trying to get us to draw a link to Genesis 10 and 11. At Babel, people of one speech could not understand one another, because they were trying to get to heaven by themselves, to get their own name. At Pentecost, people of many speeches were all able to understand one another. Why? Because in Acts 2 God "comes down" again, only in blessing, not in judgment (Gen.11:5ff.) At Pentecost, God reverses the curse of Babel, because of the work of his Son. Now, in Christ, there is no Greek or Jew (Gal.3:28). In Eph.2:14ff, Paul explains that the cross removes the pride and self-naming that leads to racial animosity and human disunity. The church now is to show the world how in Christ the lost community of humanity can be recovered. That is what we are to be now! We are to be an "alternate city" of God (Matt.5:14-17) in the midst of every "City of Man", showing the unity of cultures and races, and classes that only Christ can bring. And finally, someday, the curse will be totally gone. *"In that day I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all may call on the name of the Lord, and serve him together."* (Zeph 3:9).

c) Discussion question. What are the implications of the unity of the Spirit to us?

Model Answer

Here are two implications for Christians.

a) In general, it means Christians must be very wary of residual racial and cultural prejudice in themselves.

“Racial roles are superseded in the New Testament, where ‘there cannot be Greek and Jew... barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all, and in all.’ (Col.3:1). Any attempt to grade the branches of mankind by an appeal to Gen. 9:25-27 is re-erecting what God has demolished.” – Kidner, p.103

b) In particular, it means Christians should live in places and look for opportunities to show within the church, the unity among people groups that the gospel can bring.

Sharing Question

- a. Can you share with us a time in your life when you were striving to make a name for yourself? How did it feel? What kinds of troubles did it bring?
- b. How is seeking God’s name different from seeking your own name?
- c. How can you take positive steps in learning to seek God’s name instead of your own?
List down how others can pray for you with regard to this.