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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 10: 1-32

“The History of the Sons of Noah (The Table of Nations)”

TRANSCRIPT

I know that when we come to a chapter such as Genesis chapter 10, we tend to skip over this, and I must confess that I had some thoughts about possibly reading only certain sections out of it, because of the vast number of biblical names that are found in this chapter. But in spite of that, we are going to read through it, and I know that one of the things that has been of special concern to you is how to pronounce the names in this chapter and I wanted to give you the official pronunciation [laughter] of all of them as I go along.

It has often been said, and I have said it and others have said it that if you want to assure an audience that the way you pronounce it is the correct way, you just say it with decisiveness and then they say, well, I thought it was the other, but he seems so sure, perhaps he is right. [Laughter] So that is the way I am going to read it, but we will read all of the verses of Genesis chapter 10 and I will make just a comment here or there as we go through on one or two points that I will not try to cover in the message.

“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.” (By the way, that first verse is

something of a formal introduction to the entire chapter and the last verse of the chapter is a formal conclusion to the entire chapter. Within it are three divisions.)

“The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.

And the sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah.

And the sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.

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.”

It is important that you notice the phrase “according to his language,” for since there was one language in the beginning, it is clear from this that chapter 10 follows chapter 11 and the confusion of languages at Babel chronologically. But it is put previously before the chapter 11 in order to concentrate attention on the chosen land through Shem.) Now we move to the sons of Ham in the second division.

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

And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one in 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.”

It is important for later biblical study to notice that Babylon was in the land of Shinar, because there is a very important prophecy in the book of Zechariah in which

Shinar is used, but not Babylon. So it is important to remember that Babylon was 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, (some think that refers to Calah, that clause and some to Nineveh.)

And Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.

And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth.”

It is rather interesting that Heth is the progenitor of the Hittites and for many years, modern students of the Bible thought that that was surely a mistake and that the Hittites never really existed, because their names had never appeared on the inscriptions and other archaeological materials. But in recent times, relatively recent times, the Hittites now have been known to be a very significant ancient peoples. It just so happened that material referring to them had never been uncovered and again the Bible in this detail, at least, has been proven to be true to history.

Verse 16:

“And the Jebusite, the Jebusites lived in Jerusalem, and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite

And the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; 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.”

Admah and Zeboiim were cities that were destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed as well and later they appear in the book of Hosea in chapter 11 in an important section.

“These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations. (And now the sacred author moves to the important division of Noah’s sons.)

And the sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad (and this is the important son of them), and Lud and Aram. (Aram is the word from which we get the Arameans and the Aramaic language is related to that group.)

And the sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. (No relation to the TV program of course.)

And Arpachshad, this is the important one of the sons of Shem and Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.

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.”

Peleg is a Hebrew word that means “to divide” and in fact, the noun form in this very form in Hebrew means “division” or it means “channel,” and some think that in this there may be some reference to channels of water, such irrigation channels. But, the author makes reference to the fact that in his days, the earth was divided and his brother’s name was Joktan. And he says no more about Peleg here in the 10th chapter because he is going to reserve Peleg for special attention in the 11th chapter since it is through Peleg that Abram will ultimately come. So we will say just a word about Joktan.

“Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah

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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.

Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.

These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.”

And then the concluding verse, which is the conclusion of the entire chapter called the table of nations,

“These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”

May God bless His inspired word.

The subject for today is exposition of the Book of Genesis is the Table of Nations or The History of the Sons of Noah. Thinking of some of the great texts of the Bible, which are so rich in the unfolding of spiritual truth, I am reminded of a Southern boy who accidentally fell into a barrel of molasses while he was visiting the country store. And looking up from his predicament, he prayed, “O Lord, make my tongue worthy of this occasion.” [Laughter]

But now I must confess that to expound Genesis chapter 10 is quite different. One of the commentators has said, “Many endure rather than enjoy reading these two chapters.” But he adds, “Informed readers agree unanimously that these chapters are strategic and historically significant.” Another author has written, “We come now to Genesis 10, a very difficult chapter. I shall ask you to be patient with me as we look at it

together. You may not find it quite what you need, for although it is quite fascinating to study, it’s exceedingly dreary to read.”

You may ask why should we spend time with a passage like this? And then he answers his own question. In answer, I would say that it is extremely important that we understand God’s movements in history. Occasionally, in theological seminaries, we are told that we should preach to people’s needs. And I would dare say that people who believe that that we should preach to people’s needs would rarely if ever preach Genesis chapter 10.

I am sure these chapters, if they were living personal chapters would feel greatly neglected when they heard the homiletics professor make statements like that. What about us, they might say. What about us? All of the chapters of the Bible are important and significant. It is clear that they are part of the word of God and I confess that I would not normally choose this chapter to preach upon, but its expository preaching that forces you to do it. And that is good for the expositor and good for people who really often have needs of which they are totally unaware.

H. C. Leupold, a very well-known and respected Lutheran commentator even questions the wisdom of ever preaching on this chapter. He says it may very well be questioned whether a man should ever preach on a chapter such as this. It could be expounded in adult Bible class study and even then a summary view of the whole chapter and in its purpose might meet all needs. Well, it is obvious I am not following his advice and you have my permission after I finish to inform me that I should have followed the advice of this distinguished Lutheran commentator. But we are going to attempt it anyway. Let me remind you of the basic overall structure of the Book of Genesis and perhaps it would help us in understanding what we face here.

The opening chapters of this book, the first 11 to be exact, tell us about the creation, the Fall, the flood, the confusion of tongues, and the dispersion of the peoples at Babylon, but all of that is the background for what begins to unfold in the last part of

chapter 11 and from chapter 12 on, because it is clear that God covers a great amount of time in a relatively short space and then devotes the remainder of the Bible to unfolding the significance of the election of Abraham and his seed, so that everything up to this point is simply background. It is not the fundamental thing that the Holy Spirit has in mind. What he has in mind is God’s plan to bless mankind through Abraham’s election through the covenantal promises that were given to him which culminate in the seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the scattering of the nations and the confusion of their tongues that took place at Babylon is simply the occasion for the call of Abraham by which God will give universal salvation suitable for the universal scattering of men over the face of the globe. Thinking about the aims of the author which he does not explicitly tell us, I would suggest to you that they include a record of the outworking of the providence of God in the nation’s history.

Over in Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 8 and 9, Moses writes when the Most High gave their nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the sons of Israel for the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob is the allotment of his inheritance. So, Moses, it seems plain and if Shem were the recorder, Shem seems plainly to have had in mind to record the outworking of the providence of God in the scattering of the nations over the earth in the particular places where they are with reference to the chosen people, the Nation Israel.

He also intended, no doubt, to explain the connections that Israel had with the other nations upon the earth among whom she will live and among whom she will witness through the revelation given to her. And they were to pay attention to the fact that they belong to the seed to whom God gave his revelation. And they should remember that the sons of Japheth and the sons of Ham were not included, and they were to be the object of the mission of Israel to the nations.

And also, I think, it was to remind the reader of the unity of man, because as Paul puts it in Acts chapter 17 and verse 26, “He made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation; that they should seek God.” So, no doubt Moses had in mind reminding of his readers of the unity of man.

So we see the peoples of the earth moving out from Babylon, developing, expanding, expanding from the Near East which is the true cradle of civilization according to holy Scripture and the striking thing about this is that the things that we see in these early chapters are the things that reappear in the latter part of the Bible. So we begin with the Garden of Eden or paradise. We begin with the Tree of Life. We have the Fall of man. We have Babylon and the scattering of the nations and confusion of tongues there. And isn’t it interesting that in the last book of the Bible, the capstone to the divine revelation, we again read about Babylon, which forms a large part of the Book of Revelation, and then we read also about paradise with the new heavens and the new earth and even a Tree of Life in the new earth or the city of the heavenly Jerusalem.

So, it would appear then that one of the purposes of God is to record how the nations have spread out over the face of the earth. Then the story of how through divine grace through Jesus Christ, the people of God are gathered together again and finally brought into the new heavens and the new earth, the permanent eternal paradise of God in the future. Now, you will also notice that in this chapter, the procedure of God moves from the whole of the nations of the earth to one particular family and finally to one part of that family and then to one family within that great family, finally narrowing down to a man by the name of Abram who was the son of Tirah. There are some implications from this of course that are important and they are such things as this.

Since the whole race has come from one man and since that one man fell, then we have implied the universal corruption of the race which is taught in holy Scripture and we also have implied the necessity and the universality of the redemption of our Lord

Jesus Christ. You may be interested to know that in chapter 10, I am sure you encountered these as we went along, there are 70 names in this chapter. In the Septuagint account translation, there are 72 names. Now, statistics may not influence or may not make much impression upon you, but there may be some significance even in that for the Lord Jesus when he sent out men with the mission to preach the gospel, you will remember, sent out on one occasion the 70. And some of thought that there is a reference by a kind of a backward reference, a kind of typological reference or some kind of reference to the universality expressed in the 70 names of this great ethnological table of nations.

Now, statistics are not too important. There was once an old gentleman who was buying a pair of shoes. He didn’t think the leather was very good, he probably said like those of us, “Oh it is not as good as it used to be.” The salesman said the leather in those shoes will last longer than you do. While the elderly gentleman happened to be 98 years of age and he said, “Young man, that is where you are wrong. Statistics show that fewer people die after 98 years of age than at any other age up to that time.” [Laughter] So, statistics are not too meaningful, but I thought it was interesting that there are 70 names in that chapter.

Well, now let us look at the dispersion of Japheth or the descendants of Japheth in verses 1 through 5. Remembering that verse 1 is a kind of introduction to the whole of the chapter. It is a heading of the total table. Now, again, I should remember or remind you too of something that I said that chapter 11 actually precedes chapter 10 chronologically, but the author is showing us the dispersion first, the how of the dispersion and then in chapter 11, next Sunday, the Lord-willing we will consider this, he is showing us the why of the dispersion.

And again remember the order suggests the emphasis upon the redemptive character of this table of nations, because he says relatively little about the descendants of Japheth, more about Ham and then he will say, if you put chapters 10 and 11 together, a

great deal about the descendants of Shem. Israel should have paid attention to this because when they got in the land of Canaan, they would not have embraced the Canaanites as they did and they would have saved themselves a great deal of difficulty if they had just remembered that the Canaanites belonged to the family of Ham.

Now the first section’s heading is in verse 2, The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. For the sake of time, since we don’t have a whole lot of time, I will not be able to talk about the countries that lie back of these words. But Gomer is singled out for special attention and then also Javan is singled out. But in this first section’s heading, if you were to look at these nations, you would notice that a territory from the Aegean on the west to the Caspian on the east is indicated. And this was Paul’s field of preaching preeminently among the Gentiles.

The apostle was called to be a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles and it is the descendants of Japheth who formed primarily those people, the Western hemisphere as we know it. Now, I do not think for one moment that when Paul went to the West, that this was the West’s first contact with the Semitic line, because we know from the Old Testament prophecies, for example in the prophecy of Joel in the 3rd chapter in the 6th verse, references made to the fact that the Grecians took captives of the Israelites in the 9th century before the time of Christ. So there was a spreading out of Semitic culture and of the Semitic understanding of relationship to God centuries before Paul went to the West. That is why we read in the Book of Acts of synagogues that had a great number of proselytes attached to them. They were Gentiles who had heard of the truth proclaimed by the Israelites of the one true God, Jehovah.

But here then is the territory of the Gentiles. The expansion of the heading emphasizes Gomer, Gomer is the progenitor of the Samaritans and what we call the Indo-Europeans, that is those countries of the west like Rome and Greece and others and then of the east, India. Isn’t it interesting that India is part of the Indo-European body of

peoples? And Indians – that is, Indians from Asia -- Indians are our first cousins. They and we belong to the same family of nations. We often don’t realize that, but that is true, the Indo-Europeans.

Now Javan is singled out and Javan is a reference to Greece. Adolph Hitler and some of you were here when Hitler was around. Adolph Hitler made a great deal over the fact that the Germans came from the Japhethic clan. He called the family Aryans, which was somewhat of a misnomer, but he claimed that it referred to Caucasians of non-Jewish descent. And he contended that the Germans were pure Aryans and the rest of us were mongrels. Now he was right in affirming that the Jews were not Aryans, but of course he was wrong in affirming superiority based upon differences of family origins. You see from this of course how great things often proceed from little things because Hitler created a great deal of unfortunate disturbance over his own interpretation of the national origin of the Germans. Well, the conclusion of the 1st section follows in the fifth verse, “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.” You can see from this that chapter 10 does follow chapter 11 chronologically because we already have mentioned the languages here.

Then we turn to the descendants of Ham which are given considerably more space in this table of nations. The Hamitic peoples, remember, were the inventors. They were the pioneers. In fact, they were the ones from whom all of the greatest of the earliest civilizations developed. The heading is given in verse 6 and the sons of Ham were Cush, probably not the Ethiopian Cush, the African Cush, but the Asian Cush and Mizraim, which is Egypt and Put and Canaan, from which, of course the Canaanites descended. All of the early civilizations, it might startle you to realize this, but all of the early civilizations were Hamitic: the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Mayans, the Aztecs and others, all Hamitic. It is a great family of nations. And a great accomplishment is attributable to them in the civilization of the world.

Realizing that Canaan belongs to them, you might think that this family’s direction is toward the south and it is toward the south, but not entirely, because when you look at verses 8 through 12, you will see that within this family is Babylon, Nineveh, and other places to the north of the land. The expansion of the heading given in verse 7 through verse 19 is an expansion of three of the sons of Ham. One of them is left out entirely, for what reason, I do not know. But in connection with the sons of Ham, we read concerning Nimrod. In verse 8, now Cush became the father of Nimrod. He became a mighty one on the earth. A special attention is given to Nimrod and I would gather from this that we should give special attention to him in our thought.

Now, notice the things that are said about him. He is undoubtedly the most interesting figure, probably the most interesting figure from the standpoint of interest to us today of this entire table of nations, not the most important perhaps, but the most interesting. And he has singled out for his prowess and also for his political power. He is a true hero of the Hamitic clan. He was the originator of two great cities, the city of Babylon and also the city of Nineveh. So far from the standpoint of the men of the earth, he was a mighty man, and it is not surprising then that we read “He became a mighty one in the earth.”

Now, let me say just a few words about some of these expressions that are found here. A mighty one in the earth. That word *gibbour* which is the Hebrew word translated “mighty one” is the word we have already had in the book of Genesis. It occurs back in chapter 6 in verse 4 where we read concerning the Nephilim that were on the earth in those days and Moses writes and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children to them, those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown and that word is used there in chapter 6 verse 4.

Some have thought that because of that connection that therefore we are to think of Nimrod as one of the descendants of that group of people who came into existence through the angelic infiltration into the human race. There is, of course, no real proof of

that and then when we remember that the term *gibbour* is a term that refers to our Lord Jesus Christ in more than one place. One well-known place Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 where it is said “He is the mighty God, *El-gibbour*.” So probably we are not to make any associations that way. But we still have to answer the question, is he presented here as someone who is simply mighty, powerful in the good sense or mighty and powerful in the bad sense?

Well, most of the commentators, most of the students have decided that he was mighty in the evil sense. His name suggests that, because his name Nimrod, no offense you hunters in the audience, but Nimrod is a name that comes from the Hebrew word *marad* which means “to rebel” and with this particular addition, it refers to a stem and a form which might be translated, “let us rebel.” So that was the name of Nimrod. It is a name related to rebellion. And the Targum Jonathan, which is a paraphrase of the Old Testament, at this point reads that “he was a mighty rebel before the Lord.” So he was understood to be mighty in an evil sense. He was a tyrant. He was rebellious against God and that would appear to be probably the force of this particular section.

Now it is also said in the next verse, he was a mighty hunter before the Lord. He was a *gibbour* before the Lord, a mighty man, a hunter before the Lord and we are to ask ourselves again what does it mean to be a mighty hunter and what does it mean to be a mighty hunter before the Lord. Now, it could mean he is a mighty hunter in the estimation of the Lord. In other words, the Lord regarded him as a great hunter. But I just wonder why Jehovah would be impressed by any man’s bagging of game. And so therefore, again with most commentators I rather think that this is not a recognition of his superlative Nimrodian skills, if I may invent a term. He was not a master in snaring animals, but rather we are to think of him as a mighty hunter in rebellion against God and to think of him as in snaring men as a tyrant.

Now, that is the history of all that we know of Nimrod and it certainly is the history of the people who followed him, the Assyrians. That nation was known particularly for its policies and they have been called policies based on calculated frightfulness. If you want to know how to torture people, study the Assyrians. They had unusual, if I may use a wrong word, one I don’t like to use, they had creative abilities in torturing people. Some of the simplest things they did was just to cut out your tongue and they had other means which were most interesting. Study the torturing by the Assyrians of other nations. It is most interesting. That is, if you have strong stomach. But they were known for their calculated frightfulness and I would imagine that Nimrod was probably responsible for the spirit of it.

Nimrod reminds me of the man who sent his picture to the lonely-hearts club. A reply came back, “We are not that lonely.” [Laughter] And if Nimrod had walked down the street, someone might have said to him, “I can tell from just one look at you that you are a graduate of the Don Rickles Charm School.” [He] must have been a terrible character. I even heard about a person who used to go down to the sea and when he was down at the sea, the tide wouldn’t come in he was so ugly. So Nimrod was a mighty hunter in the earth and evidently a man of tremendous fierceness and frightfulness.

I also heard of a man whose funeral was being held and it was a country funeral and so the minister had a habit of stopping in the service and offering the audience a chance to say something as a eulogy of the individual. Well, he was probably the most cantankerous character in the village and so when the minister came to that appropriate point in the service, he offered an opportunity for someone to say some favorable words about John. Well, there was a long and embarrassing wait and no one stood up and told. Finally, one man just had to stand up and so the only thing he could think of to say when he got on his feet was, “I will say this for John. He wasn’t always as mean as he sometimes was.” And so, he must have been a character of the spirit of Nimrod too.

It is, I think, an interesting thing that evidently Nimrod who founded Nineveh and founded Babylon, two great cities characterized by opposition to the people of God and the revelation of God that the character of this man impressed itself upon the city. I have often noticed this in the conversion of individuals. I don’t lay this down as a biblical doctrine. This is just an empirical observation. But I’ve noticed about people who were converted, if they are converted by a man who has a relatively light and superficial kind of ministry, but true in the fact that the gospel was preached, usually people converted under that kind of ministry never do become deep in the study of the word of God.

But on the other hand, when individuals are converted under men who are expositors of Scripture and who have some theological depth, they frequently respond with the same kind of Christianity. I remember Dr. Barnhouse once making the observation by saying, because he was a man who preached the gospel very forthrightly at every opportunity he could get, regardless of where it might be, he used to say, “My converts are born speaking, talking.” There is a sense in which there is a communication of a family characteristic. You notice that in ordinary life. When individuals are born just naturally, they frequently take on the characteristics of their family, their father, their mother.

And here is a man, Nimrod who was a rebel before the Lord. So what would you expect from a man like that? Apart from the grace of God, you would expect him to have established a thoroughly autocratic, imperialistic, despotic system of tyrannical government. The same kind of government that we find described in Isaiah chapter 13 and 14 of Babylon and you would expect to find back of it, standing Satan in all his rage against God. And isn’t it interesting that in the Bible, we have the city of Babylon and over here the city of Jerusalem and these two cities are in constant conflict down through the history of the word of God. Babylon in the Old Testament, then ultimately Babylon in the New Testament and finally the city of Babylon is over throne and there is that refrain of the book of revelation. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.

And what happens immediately after that? John looks up and he sees the heavenly city, the new and heavenly city, Jerusalem descending from heaven to take its place upon the earth in the new heavens and the new earth. So here we have then Nimrod, the founder of Babylon, the place where organized rebellion against God first took place. That is why Babylon is the anti-type of Jerusalem in the new, it is the place where organized rebellion against God first took place. I am emphasizing organized, because rebellion first took place in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned. But at Babylon, we have organized rebellion of the character of a city and a people against God and Nimrod is the founder of it. He was a wicked man. And notice also that characteristic is a wickedness that affects spiritual things. In other words, it is religion that is involved.

So in chapter 17 of the Book of Genesis, we read about the beast. And sitting upon the beast is the scarlet woman signifying again, Babylon, and Babylonianism, the system of rebellion against God which had its origin right there in the dispersal of the nations and confusion of tongues that took place in that city. So autocratic imperialistic government with Satan behind it originates with Nimrod. No wonder that he is singled out for special attention here in the 10th chapter of the book of Genesis.

Now then, Moses speaks of the sons of Mizraim in verses 13 and 14, Egypt. It is rather interesting that the term for Egypt is a plural one in the Hebrew text. Mizraim, perhaps because Egypt was normally thought of as being composed of upper Egypt and lower Egypt so that two Egypts is the sense of Mizraim.

Then the sons of Canaan are mentioned in verses 15 through 19. It might be startling to find the sons of Canaan in the Hamitic clan because they spoke Semitic languages, but the reason is that we are speaking geographically and furthermore, there had been migrations and inter-movements that meant that the Canaanites were really from

the descendants of Ham, but they were in the land at the time the children of Israel were there and the conclusion of the second section is given in the 20th verse.

Then the descendants of Shem are mentioned in verses 21 through 32. I just want to mention one or two points here because this will come up again when we deal with Abraham. Now if Shem is the recorder of this history, then Shem begins to speak here of himself and of the descendants of Shem or someone in that line. The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. Now the line singles out one or two men for special attention. One is Eber. Now, Eber is a name that means “to pass over.” And this word, which comes from that verb which means to pass over leads to the term, Hebrew. So Hebrew comes from *eber*. Eber meant beyond, a pass over. So it referred to peoples that were beyond the Euphrates or as the Hebrew commentator Rashi, beyond the Jordan, so that the Hebrews are people who came from beyond the river. And Eber is said to be the father of Peleg.

Notice verse 25, “And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg.” In verse 21, it is stated that Shem is the father of all the children of Eber and now here Eber was the father of Peleg. These are just little flags to make you pay attention as you read through this particular genealogy, because the author is interested in the line that finally brings us to Abraham. The expansion of the heading is, I think, self-explanatory, there is nothing of unusual interest here except the 25th verse, which some commentators have called the most intriguing in the entire table. It says, “Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided.” Now, what is meant by the dividing of the earth?

It has been suggested that this is a reference since Peleg means to divide or it means a channel. It has been suggested that this is a reference to the division of the one great land mass and that in this time there was a division in the one great land mass and the formation of the continents as we now know them. And in fact, it has even been surmised and this is surely just speculation. It has been surmised that one of the things

that occurred was that what we know as the American continent as it began to move westward, gradually disappeared from the horizon and that may have given rise to the myth about a lost continent called Atlantis, which disappeared beneath their landing. Now, that is all pure speculation. But it is an interesting thing to speculate about.

I think, however, more wisely and more soundly we probably should refer verse 25 to what takes place in chapter 11. That is the division of the earth that is referred to is the division that occurred at the confusion of languages and the dispersion of the nations in Babylon. The other is something to speculate about, but there doesn’t seem to be any solid support for it at the present time.

Well, the conclusion to this section is given in verse 31 and then the conclusion to the whole table in verse 32 with, “These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood. This is an important chapter. I wish that it were possible to create for you the sense of importance that I feel that it has in the divine revelation. It is designed to show God’s purpose gradually concentrating on one man, Abram.

One of the students of the Book of Genesis has entitled his chapter on this chapter, God’s funnel. Now, a funnel is an instrument for narrowing the flow of liquids and he has suggested that what we have here is the liquids of the vast numbers of nations which are put in the funnel and then Shem is the neck of the funnel and then what comes out is the family of Abram within the family of Shem and so we have a narrowing down, we have Shem, we have Arpachshad, then we have Peleg and then finally, we have Tirah and we finally come to Abram, who is the important man. Now when Christ comes, the procedure is reversed. We moved to one man who is finally the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ and then, it is like turning the funnel around the other way and through this one man, now the blessing of redemption moves out and ultimately includes a multitude which no man can number, the product of the distinguishing grace of God.

So, we do not think that because God has selected Abram and his seed that therefore heaven will be peopled by a few number of people. It is possible that there will be more people by far in heaven than there are in hell. And it is to the distinguishing grace of God that we are indebted for we know that a great multitude is to be converted in the future which no man can number. So when we talk about divine election, which the Bible so plainly teaches, it is only ignorance that suggest that therefore we are preaching the salvation of a few and the damnation of the vast, vast, vast majority of peoples that have been born. We do not know the answer to that, but we do know that God has through his grace selected and is bringing to faith in Christ a vast number of people called even the world, all due to the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross.

Is that favoritism? Is it favoritism that God has done it this way? No, I wouldn’t call it favoritism. It is divine, electing grace for unworthy people, for no one deserves to be saved. All deserve to be lost. Everyone of us, from the preacher first and foremost to every single individual in this audience, we all deserve to be lost, but divine electing, distinguishing grace has been given by virtue of the cross of Christ for unworthy people and the gospel message goes out, setting forth the terms upon which you may come to faith in Christ. And the terms are very simple. To him that worketh not, not by joining the church, not by praying through, not by doing good works, not by being baptized, not by sitting at the Lord’s table, not by being a cultured citizen who pays his debts, not by being an outstanding benevolent member of the society, to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Now the message is plain and clear, it is offered as the means of salvation stated and if you in this audience are lost and undone and under the judgment of God, knowing your sin, the remedy is in our Lord Jesus Christ and we invite you as an ambassador of Him to recognize your lost condition, turn to Him within your heart, give Him thanks for what He has done for you through Jesus Christ, lean upon Him, trust Him, stop trusting

all of these other reeds that will not hold you up, trust in our Lord Jesus and come to know everlasting life.

Join the company of the seed of Abraham who are the recipients of distinguishing grace. May God help you to come. To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly. His faith is counted for righteousness and having received Christ as savior, resting on what he has done, we are just as acceptable to God as any one in the whole land, because we have the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. May God help you to come. Don’t leave this auditorium without having that personal trust in Jesus Christ that saves. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the privilege of studying a chapter such as this. We confess Lord, that we often look at it and think that while it is the word of God, it does not have a message for us today. But we acknowledge our own faithlessness in not seeing the sufficiency of all of the word of God.

But we especially pray Lord that if there are some in this audience who have never believed in Christ, O God enable them to recognize their lost condition and to see Christ as the remedy and flee to Him and join that great company of people, the people of God whose only hope is the merit of the son of God. Lord, we thank Thee that it’s sufficient hope. May grace, mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.