**Lesson 12**

**23, 24 August 2021**

**Genesis 11:1-9**

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Creation* video #10, “Dispersion and Descent”, part 1**

**The Table of Nations** – We will see how the table of nations listed in chapter 11 relates to the curse on Canaan. And we will see that the account of the tower of Babel, given in chapter 12, explains *how* the dispersion of nations came to be.

**Sons of Japheth** – Where these people settled relate to some places familiar to us today, the Indo-European region of the world. Linguistic scholars tell us that all modern Indo-European languages are related, coming from a common ancestor dating to the Stone Age! Japheth’s son Madai traces to the Medes, i.e. the later Medo-Persian empire. Javan traces to the Ionians and the Greeks. Tubal and Meshach correspond to two rivers in modern day Russia, the Tobol (in western Siberia) and the Moskva. Japheth’s son Tiras has ties to the Etruscans. Gomer’s descendants ended up in what is modern day Germany. Japheth’s grandson Togarmah is the ancestor of people in modern day Turkey, while his grandson Tarshish is the ancestor of people in Spain. (We will also encounter the city of Tarshish in the book of Jonah.) Kittim is the island of Cyprus, while Dodanim has ties to Rhodes and the Rhone River area.

**Sons of Ham: Nimrod** – As we read through verses 6-20, we are reading a list of all the major enemies of the children of Israel. In verses 8-12 we encounter the person of Nimrod, “the first on earth to be a mighty man”. The term “mighty man” can also be translated “giant” or “tyrant”. So Nimrod is probably the ancestor of the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis 6:4, as well as the giants in the land of Canaan during the time of Moses. Nimrod’s name means “we shall rebel”. So the end of verse 9 could be paraphrased, “Like Nimrod, an arrogant tyrant, defiant before the face of the Lord.”

One of the first places Nimrod established his kingdom was the city of Babel, later to be called Babylon. So the Babylonians descended from him. One of the next places Nimrod went was Assyria, so the Assyrians also came from him. These two cultures have great importance in the later history of Israel. As we now know, after the kingdom of Israel divided into two separate kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, both nations continued to decline into sin until they were overcome by enemies and taken into captivity. Israel was conquered by Assyria, and Judah by the Babylonians. Throughout Scripture Babylon is an archetype of disobedience, pride and rebellion.

**Canaan’s Line** – This is the line that was prophetically cursed by Noah. In verses 16-18 we encounter a list of “-ites” that will be given nineteen different times in the Bible. These are the enemies that the Israelites would encounter when they began to conquer the land of Canaan. Of particular interest are the Jebusites because they are the clan that settled in Jerusalem. They were there for hundreds of years, up until the time that David finally routed them and captured the city for Israel. So the most sacred city was originally inhabited by the most wicked tribe descended from Canaan. And as we saw in the homework when we read Leviticus 18, all of these people groups were engaged in the most depraved and evil practices imaginable.

**Sons of Shem** – There is a linguistic connection between the sons of Shem and the *Semites*, i.e. the Jewish people. This is the line of promise, through whom the Messiah will come. In verse 21 we read about the children of Eber, which is the root word for “Hebrew”. So the godly line of Seth is now continuing to flow through Shem’s descendants. They settle in the Middle East and Persia area.

**Peleg** – Peleg was one of Eber’s two sons mentioned in verse 25. It says that “in his days the earth was divided.” What does this mean? This phrase is a time reference for the original audience. Think about what is coming next in the narrative: the tower of Babel, at which time the world is divided as the people disperse according to the languages that they speak. So Moses is giving a heads up about the next major event in his account.

**70 Names** – Chapter ten lists a total of 70 names of people, regions or clans. This is not an accident. Remember that Cain’s genealogy contained seven names (going back to Adam) and Seth‘s contained ten. These are both numbers used to indicate completeness, so combining them to produce 70 continues this idea. Moses is not necessarily giving an exhaustive list of names. Rather he is using them to make a point. He wants us to understand what was going on when Noah spoke the prophecies concerning his sons.

**Noah’s Prophecies** – Look at Genesis 9:24-28 to see the details of Noah’s prophecy. The various parts of it were fulfilled in these ways:

1. verse 25 = “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.” – This was effectively fulfilled when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan and they conquered the land. Canaan become essentially a servant to the children of Israel.
2. verse 26 = “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.” – Notice that Noah *didn’t* say, “Blessed be Shem.” Instead he indicates that Shem’s is the righteous line, through which the name of the Lord will be held high.
3. verse 27 = “And may God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” – Canaan’s descendants and Japheth’s descendants are *not* Hebrews. Canaan’s descendants are pagans; they are the wicked. But who were Japheth’s descendants? “Let him dwell in the tents of Shem” is not a familiar saying to us. But what it implies is this: “May Japheth be as an honored guest, enjoying all the wealth of Shem.” Japheth is to be invited into the tents of Shem and treated as if he were family. If we were to overlay a map of the world as it was during the book of Acts upon the map we did for our homework, we would see that when the church was scattered to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, they went to the descendants of Japheth. This is *our* story. This is the chosen line of righteousness going down, century after century, generation after generation, and becoming expansive. The gospel includes those who were once far off, but are now brought near.

**TAKE AWAYS:**

*The following thoughts are taken from Bible Study Fellowship’s Lesson 7 on Genesis, pages 2-3. I have also included another of their doctrinal statements on the back of this sheet.*

* Prophecy about Shem: “Noah praised the Lord, the God of Shem…God used Shem’s people to write and preserve most of the books of Scripture. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, was born through the human line of Shem. No wonder Noah opened his mouth in praise! **His inspired burst of prophetic thanksgiving foreshadows all the praise that will rise to God and the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity**.”
* Prophecy about Japheth: “The original audience understood that to live in a person’s tent implied sharing hospitality and blessings. **Throughout history, Japheth’s nations have generally prospered through association with the nation of Shem.”**
* Concerning Nimrod: “The combined terms warrior and hunter paired with kingdom expansion lend support to the theory that Nimrod founded a military state by force. This would mean he was a hunter of men in defiance of God’s commands about the sacredness of human life…**The mighty cities listed that he founded are in present-day Iraq.”**

**The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God**

*Genesis 9-11 sets God’s sovereignty on display through a seemingly tedious genealogy and the Table of Nations. These accounts showcase the expansion of the peoples of the world from Noah’s three sons. The lists provide a bridge to the patriarch Abraham and nation of Israel…These chapters demonstrate that God controls and guides all history for His glory and our good.*

**God is sovereign.** God determines the outcome of all things according to His own wise purposes. He has absolute authority and rule over His creation (1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Psalm 47:7). Nothing exists outside the scope of God’s rule (Ephesians 1:11). He controls and guides all events for His glory and for believers’ good (Romans 8:28-29). God governs human history. He does not merely adjust His plans to incorporate people’s decisions but determines the course of mankind (Daniel 4:34-35; Acts 2:23; Acts 17:24-27). He calls the saved to Himself (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2).

**God is also good.** God fulfills His sovereign reign balancing every perfect facet of His character and will. Not only is God in control, everything He does accomplishes a good purpose that is ultimately beneficial. Believers need not rebel against His commands or demand their preferred outcomes. There is no cause to worry that God will be late or make a mistake. Because God is both sovereign and good, we need not fear failures as final or resent His discipline or redirection. God the Son, Jesus Christ, defeated evil, death and sin. His victory gives comfort and security for believers in trials, temptations and failures (Romans 8:31-39). When we understand who God is, we love and trust Him.

**God is sovereign, whether we recognize it or not.** When I do not believe God is sovereign over my life, I will flounder upon waves of insecurity and indecision. Anxiety will rule over and above the peace of God. Worry and dread will overwhelm me every time I watch the news or hear about our world’s evils. I will strive to define truth on my own terms yet never find satisfaction. I will fear failure, doubting God is sovereignly working all things for good. I will fear the future, doubting God’s wise control. And I will exhaust myself striving unsuccessfully to control every word, every relationship, every act and every outcome in life.

When I truly believe God is sovereign over my life, I am free not to worry. I realize I do not have enough power or control over my life to thwart the plans and purposes of God. I can take my fears and worries to God in prayer and confidently know His perfect and pleasing will prevails. Romans 8:31 states, **“If the sovereign God of the universe is for me, who can be against me?”** He is victorious. He rules everything. He has already determined the moment by moment details, the considerations and the circumstances of my life. By His Spirit, He conforms my will to His and weaves my life into His purposes. He alone is good.