

genesis

God's Book of Beginnings

The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)

10:1 This chapter lists the descendants of Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Every time they are named together in the Bible, the three sons of Noah are listed in the same order: **Shem, Ham and Japheth** ^{Genesis 5:32, 6:10, 7:13, 9:18, 10:1, 1 Chronicles 1:4}; however, their birth order (determined from two verses ^{Genesis 9:24, 10:21}) was either **Shem, Japheth and Ham** ^{NAS, NLT, ESV, NRSV} or **Japheth, Shem and Ham** ^{NIV, KJV}, depending on how the second verse ^{Genesis 10:21} is translated.

However, Moses used a third order when discussing Noah's sons here: **Japheth, Ham and Shem**. Moses also revealed that both Japheth and Shem were blessed ^{Genesis 9:26-27}, Shem received the greater blessing ^{Genesis 11:10-32}, and some of the descendants of Ham were cursed ^{Genesis 9:24-27}. The reason for Japheth being listed first in this chapter is unclear; however, the discussion of Ham before Shem follows a Biblical pattern of placing the genealogy of the non-elect before the elect (Cain before Abel ^{Genesis 4:1-2}, Ishmael before Isaac ^{Genesis 16:15, 21:2-3}, Esau before Jacob ^{Genesis 25:24-26}).



Genesis 10-11

The Sons of Japheth

10:2-5 Japheth had seven sons. These clans (“maritime peoples”) spread out to lands in the north with access to seas ^{Isaiah 11:11, 20:6}, following the Tower of Babel dispersion ^{Genesis 11:1-9}.

The names of greatest note mentioned in Japheth’s descendants are Magog, Meshech and Tubal. Ezekiel prominently mentioned Gog (a name or a title), the “chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”, as being from “the land of Magog” ^{Ezekiel 38:2-3}, and an End Times enemy of Israel ^{Ezekiel 38-39}.

The Sons of Ham

10:6-20 Ham had four sons. The two most important groups among Ham’s descendants were headed by Nimrod ^{1 Chronicles 1:10, Micah 5:6} and Canaan ^{Genesis 9:22-27, 1 Chronicles 1:8,13-16, Exodus 6:4}.

The four clans generally scattered from Shinar (Babylonia) to the south and to the west.

Nimrod (possibly means “rebel” in Hebrew) was a powerful warrior and dictator ^{v.8, 1 Chronicles 1:10} who founded many cities (including Nineveh and Babel/Babylon) in the land of Assyria ^{v.10-12}.

The curse on Canaan carried over to his family’s land (later referred to as Palestine and the PL).

Canaan’s descendants (Canaanites or Amorites) became completely consumed by depravity and remained in utter sinfulness for over 400 years ^{Genesis 15:13-16}. During that time, the Canaanites not only defiled themselves, but also corrupted the animals ^{Joshua 6:21} and the land itself ^{Leviticus 18:24-25}.

As a result, God commanded Moses (who passed it to Joshua, God’s chosen one to lead Israel into the PL ^{Deuteronomy 31:14, 23}) “do not leave alive anything [in the PL] that breathes” ^{Deuteronomy 7:1-11, 20:16-18}.

The Sons of Shem

10:21-32 Shem had five sons. His descendants were known as Shemites or Semites.

An interesting Biblical issue is illustrated by examining two lines of descent from Noah to Eber:

Moses’ genealogy: Noah ⇒ Shem ⇒ Arphaxad ⇒ Shelah ⇒ Eber ^{Genesis 10:22,24, 11:10-15} and

Luke’s genealogy: Noah ⇒ Shem ⇒ Arphaxad ⇒ Cainan ⇒ Shelah ⇒ Eber ^{Luke 3:35-36}.

The added name in the second list is a reminder: the generations are not always father to son.

Another curious issue is in the number of “nations” (the descendants of Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth) that were scattered following the Flood ^{Genesis 6-8} and the Tower of Babel event on the

“plain in Shinar” ^{Genesis 11:1-9}, and the number of families (Jacob’s descendants) who later entered

Egypt ^{Genesis 46:1-47:12}. Both the nations ^{Genesis 10} and families ^{Genesis 46:27, Deuteronomy 10:22} numbered 70.

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price, 505-294-4743, ron@hopeinchristnm.com.

Genesis 10-11

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11a)

These verses ^{v.1-9} give the reason the nations scattered to the locations discussed above ^{Genesis 10}.

11:1 God had initially created man to communicate with Him ^{Genesis 1:28} and with each other ^{v.6}. The Flood survivors (Noah and family) and their immediate descendants spoke one language.

11:2 Shinar (Babylonia) was the area around the Tigris & Euphrates Rivers, including Babylon.

There are two different ways this verse has been translated ^{Genesis 10:21}. It has been rendered:

“As men moved eastward...” NIV, NAS, NLT and “As the men moved from the east...” KJV, ESV, NRSV.

11:3-4 In response to God’s command to be “fruitful” and “fill the earth” ^{Genesis 9:1}, the people started to migrate ^{v.2}, but their pride (and undoubtedly the powerful influence of Nimrod) led them to decide to rebel against God and His command. They chose to use their own intelligence and knowledge to build something that would (in their eyes) give them importance/worth. Consequently, the people began to build a high tower that would be a monument to their abilities, in an attempt to steal the glory that only God deserves.

The building materials (brick and tar) were used, because they were readily available in the area.

11:5 God “came...to see the...tower” (human terms ^{Genesis 3:9} counter to God’s omniscience).

11:6-7 The LORD proclaimed His displeasure at the people’s vanity leading to arrogant desire to primarily do things directed at self-glorification. In order to thwart the misguided course of mankind, God eliminated the ease of communication by creating multiple languages, and therefore producing confusion that halted the continuation of their coordinated efforts.

Notice the use of “us” ^{v.7} in reference to the multiple persons in the Godhead ^{Genesis 1:26, 3:22}.

There are many interpretations of the phrase “nothing they plan to do will be impossible” ^{v.6b}.

Whatever else it may mean, it is reminder of the inevitable expansion of unchecked pride ^{Genesis 6:5}.

11:8-9 The people were frustrated at “the LORD [confusing] the language of the whole world”, and they “stopped building”, “spread out into...nations, each with its own language” ^{Genesis 10:5} and became “scattered...over the...whole earth” ^{Genesis 10:32}. God’s sovereign will produced the commanded dispersion, because man chose to ignore God’s repeated decree ^{Genesis 1:28, 9:1}.

The tower was located in the city called Babel (*bābel*: gate of god; taken from *bālal*: confusion)

(origin of our word ‘babble’). However, the name of the place/city was later changed to Babylon.

Babylon is the symbolic city of man ^{Revelation 14:8}, while Jerusalem is the city of God ^{2 Chronicles 33:4,7}.

This is the antithesis of what God did on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ death. Following His provision of the Holy Spirit ^{John 16:7} to all genuine believers, He gave the “God-fearing Jews” from many nations (with many languages), who were in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost ^{Acts 2:5}, the ability to understand the apostles as they presented impassioned Gospel speeches ^{Acts 2:6-11}.

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The Lineage of Shem down to Abram and Lot (Genesis 11b)

11:10-25 In the previous chapter, Moses briefly discussed descendants of Shem ^{Genesis 10:21-31}. However here, he recounted specifics in the genealogy of Shem all the way to Abram.

Note that this genealogy demonstrates the gradual decreasing pattern of the post-Flood lifespans.

Later, God Almighty (*El-Shaddai*) ^{Genesis 17:1} changed Abram's name to Abraham ^{Genesis 17:2-7}.

11:26-30 Terah fathered Abram ("exalted father"), Nahor and Haran. Lot was the son of Haran, who died in Ur of the Chaldeans, their former homeland ^{Genesis 15:7}. Abram was married to Sarai ("my princess") (his half-sister ^{Genesis 20:12}), but "Sarai was barren" (mentioned twice).

This text ^{v.26} indicates Terah began having sons at the age of 70. However, Nahor and/or Haran were born first, because later Scripture ^{Genesis 11:32, 12:4} points to Terah being 130 at Abram's birth.

Most scholars believe Ur of the Chaldeans was a prominent city in southeastern Mesopotamia ("between the rivers", referring to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) (which is in present day Iraq).

11:31-32 Terah took his family (including Abram, Sarai and Lot), and moved northwest from the Ur of Chaldeans, up the Euphrates River, in anticipation of going all the way "to Canaan". However, they "settled" in the city of Haran, and while there, Terah died at the age of 205.

It may seem like they took the wrong path from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan (going northwest, instead of directly west), but while they did not take the shortest route, they did take the safest. Had they headed straight west from Ur, they would have faced a vast and terribly harsh desert.

The people of Ur of Chaldeans and Haran worshipped *Sin* (or *Nanna*), the Mesopotamian moon god.

Outline of Genesis (A reminder of where we are in our study of Genesis.)

Part 1 Early History of Mankind

Genesis 1-2	Creation (Universe, Mankind)
Genesis 3	Fall of Man
Genesis 4	Cain and Abel
Genesis 5-6	Days of Noah
Genesis 7-8	Flood of Noah
Genesis 9-10	Post-Flood World
Genesis 11	Tower of Babel

Part 2 The Jewish Patriarchs

Genesis 12-20	Abraham
Genesis 21-26	Isaac
Genesis 27-36	Jacob
Genesis 37-50	Joseph