Torah Series - Book of Genesis

E. Genesis 10:1–11:32 – Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel

Descendants of Noah's sons and the confusion of languages at Babel.

Introduction to the Table of Nations (Genesis 10):

- This chapter (often called the **Table of Nations**) traces the descendants of Noah's three sons—Japheth, Ham, and Shem—showing how the earth was repopulated and the nations spread out after the Flood.
- It presents a structured genealogy that is not strictly linear or exhaustive but serves a theological purpose in the biblical narrative.

Genesis 10:2-5 – Sons of Japheth:

- Generally associated with **Indo-European** peoples and territories to the north and west (ex: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, etc.).
- Their lines emphasize maritime and distant peoples who "spread out" in their lands according to their languages, clans, and nations.

Genesis 10:6-20 – Sons of Ham:

- Includes Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Put, and Canaan - **African and Near Eastern** peoples.
- **Nimrod** (a "mighty man" {Heb: *Gibborim* Greek: *Iantes* English: ***Giant***} & "mighty hunter before the Lord"), founder of kingdoms in Shinar (Babylon) and Assyria (ex: Nineveh).
- Connections to ancient kings/tyrants, and themes of **empire-building** and **rebellion** that anticipate the **Tower of Babel**. Peoples who arise to oppose God's people (*Rephaim/Anakim* later)
- Not a second incursion of fallen angels producing new hybrids (ended by the flood), but a **human-led repetition** of the same prideful, violent, idolatrous spirit. We note how God will respond. Not with a total flood-like wipeout but rather with dispersion/exile at Babel.

Genesis 10:21-32 – Sons of Shem:

- Ancestors of the **Semitic** peoples, including the line leading to **Abraham** and **Israel** (ex: **Eber** (origins of *Hebrew*), Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, etc.).
- Shem's line receives special emphasis as the **line of promise**.
- The chapter concludes by noting the division of the earth's peoples by families, languages, lands, and nations.

Genesis 11:1-9 – Transition to Babel:

- This story is happening in the context of the three genealogies at the same time
- Time: Bronze Age - smelting bronze from copper (Cypress) & tin (Afghanistan).
- First Babylonian Empire arises. Means: "Gate of the Gods"
- The whole earth had one language and speech.
- People settled in Shinar and built a city and tower (ziggurat) "with its top in the heavens" to make a name for themselves and avoid being scattered. The idea isn't to 'climb to heaven' but rather to bring a god down.

- Pagan temples, when complete, had a dedication ritual to open the idol's nostrils/mouth. Then they can manipulate the god to make him do what they want.
- God confounds their language (the confusion of tongues), leading to **the scattering** of the peoples across the earth.
- The city is named Babel (confusion). Scattering of the bronze age collapse: exile/diaspora/spreading out

Mind-Blowing Broader Themes:

- Deut 32:8 - Hebrew: "When the Most High gave to **the nations** their inheritance, **when he divided mankind**, he fixed the borders of the peoples **according to the number of the sons of God.**" Greek: "When the Most High **divided the nations**, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of **the *angels* of God.**"
- "The Nations" - 70 of them from the Gen 10 genealogies. These are the 'Gentiles'.
- God is holy. People are sinful. God withdraws from the nations. "Sons of God/Angels of God" - 70 angels who God placed as divine stewards over the nations.
- Deut 32:9 - "But **the Lord's portion** is his people, **Jacob** his allotted heritage"
- These steward angels become corrupt (demons). They accepted (or demanded) worship from the peoples under their care, leading the nations into **idolatry**.
    - Deut 32:17 "They **sacrificed to demon**s that were not God, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded."
    - Psalm 96:5 Hebrew: "For all **the gods** of the peoples are **worthless idols**, but the LORD made the heavens." LXX: "For all **the gods of the heathen are demons**: but the LORD made the heavens."
- The **spiritual reality** behind pagan religions: not mere human invention, but **humanity's enslavement to rebellious spiritual powers**
- The Gospel: Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension **reclaim authority over the nations**. The Great Commission (Matthew 28) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (reversing Babel's confusion of tongues) begin the process of **gathering the nations** back under Christ. The Church participates in this restoration as the renewed people of God.
- This is **massive** in St. Paul's writings: Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 2:15, Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; Romans 8:38-39.
- This completes **the three major rebellions** (**falls**) of humanity:
    - Genesis 3: Eden - **Death**
    - Genesis 6: Flood - **Sin**/Violence/Evil
    - Genesis 11: Babel - Nations under the power of **Demons**
- 1 John 3:8 "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil"
- Further Example: Daniel's conversation with Gabriel (8-9) - "The **prince of the kingdom** of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia" ("Prince" - a territorial power or fallen "son of God"/angelic ruler) assigned to the Persian Empire, opposing God's purposes for Israel.

Genesis 11:10-32 – Genealogies Resume

- Traces the family line of **Shem** down to **Abram**
- Deut 32:9 with God's portion/Jacob. John 4:22 "You **Samaritans** worship something you don't understand. We Jews understand what we worship, since **salvation comes from the Jews.**"
- Salvation is from the Jews through Shem's family line leading up to the Christ, the Messiah. John 12:32 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all people** to myself."
