

98-08-16a

Let's begin our study of the Word of God this morning with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of assembling together and of studying your Word and worshipping through the presence of your Spirit and the power of these truths in our souls. We pray this morning that we will have insight and understanding of the truth contained in this account and that it will be meaningful to us and accomplish the purpose for which you have given it to us.

We pray for those who are not with us this morning that you will preserve and protect them and for those who are ill that they can be restored to health and function. We pray that in all things, in the daily details of our lives, the glory of our Savior will be reflected. We pray that the purpose you have for our lives will be fulfilled as we seek to walk in a way that pleases you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, I would actually like to read the chapter that is under our view because it is not a section that we will go through verse by verse, and nor do we need to.

And we'll talk a little bit about that after we read it. But we are in chapter 10 of Genesis. I'd like to read chapter 10, watching in particular the threefold division of this chapter by descendants of the sons of Noah.

We know that Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The descendants, actually the nations that sprung from these three sons are given in chapter 10. There is a reason why this information is here.

It is exceedingly important. Chapter 10 and chapter 11 are juxtaposed. They are put side by side for a reason, and neither one is complete without the other.

And we are going to actually move into chapter 11, our famous Tower of Babel story this morning. But we want to do that in the context of chapter 10. We have already seen the post-flood happenings with Noah and his vineyard and the episode in his tent.

The subsequent curse that is pronounced in Noah's swan song on his grandson Canaan and his descendants. We have noted the parallels which are fruitful in terms of meditation. When you think about the infraction that took place in the garden that involved a husband and wife, they are divided and conquered, as it were, by temptation, the forbidden fruit.

Here, as we understand the passage, a similar thing has happened to the new progenitor of the human race, Noah. And in partaking of the product of a fruit, apparently the wife is subverted with a resulting curse. It is very interesting, though, in the light of what we observed in chapter 9, when God delegated responsibility for judgment to man.

Remember, we saw in chapter 9 that God said, I will demand life's blood at your hand. I will never again render judgment on the entire earth. Now you, O man, will be the ones to broker or to execute judgment on the earth.

So we find it very interesting that in this first great crime that we have recorded after the flood, the incestuous relationship that Ham engages in with his own mother, it is not God who pronounces the curse. God pronounced the curse on the various participants at the fall. I shouldn't say the participants.

The ground is cursed, the serpent is cursed, and there is cursing associated with the vocation of man and the childbearing of women, although Adam and Eve are not personally cursed, and it is important to remember that. But God pronounces the cursing on that occasion, doesn't he? At the point of the murder of Abel and the unrepentant attitude of Cain, God pronounces the curse on Cain. At the same time, he preserves him.

God renders that judgment. Here in the first crime recorded after the flood, who is it that pronounces the curse? It's Noah. Now it's Noah's job to render judgment, to pronounce verdict.

And so it is on the lips of Noah that we find the curse on Canaan. And it reflects the change in economy following the flood. God is not going to render judgment, universal judgment, the way that he did with the worldwide flood.

Now these things are going to be in the hands of man. You say, well, wait a minute. Aren't there nations and things that are cursed by God in subsequent history? This is where Genesis 10 and Genesis 11 clarify our understanding of God's dealings in the Old Testament.

What is the means by which God is going to judge nations in the Old Testament? How does God judge Israel? Once they arrive in the land and they become a fully fledged nation of their own, it is other nations. Man is the instrument by which man is judged. It is the Assyrians.

It is the Babylonians. It is the various surrounding entities, the Philistines, the Egyptians, and so forth, that are used as instruments of judgment in God's hand. Man is now the instrument of judging man.

God does not wreak universal judgment, universal destruction, and will not do so again until the closing pages of human history are being written. We see this reflected in this episode with Noah and his sons. Then in chapter 10, which we are going to read as our reading this morning, we have the genealogy of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth, Gomer, Magog, Madi, Javan, Tubal, Meshach, and Tiras. We've already seen that these are the most far-flung of the

known nations to Israel.

Many of these went to the northern regions of Europe. We know Madi indicates the Medes. Javan are the Greeks.

Gomer and Magog, Tubal and Meshach and Tiras, these are up in the far northern regions. The farthest stretches of the known civilized world are where the sons of Japheth have scattered to. The sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Rethath, and Togarmah, similarly distant, primarily in the regions of the north.

The sons of Javan, and we know that J stands in for I and V for N. You get the Ionians or the roots of the Greek civilization here. Elijah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim or Rodanim. You have Rhodes, Kittim for Cyprus, Tarshish is possibly in Spain.

It has also been linked in some scholars' minds with Carthage. And from these, the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands. The word rendered coastland there is the word used sometimes for islands and sometimes for coastlands.

It has the ideas of the farthest reaches. And it literally says, from these, the farthest reaching peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations. Now we're anticipating here chapter 11, aren't we? Because we haven't had the Tower of Babel, we haven't had the dispersion of mankind because of language differences yet.

So as we have seen the pattern develop in Genesis, where you have the creation account in chapter 1, and you have the notation toward the end of the creation week of the creation of man and woman, male and female, created he them. And then you come back in chapter 2 and have the details of that given. This is a common Hebrew pattern, and there's no reason to... It's actually a common Semitic pattern, not just the Hebrews, but many of the related cultures in ancient times.

This is the way they organized their literature. This is the way they would tell a story. And these separate accounts have been the basis for people ripping Genesis and the entire Pentateuch apart into sources, and it's really not necessary.

We just look at it from a Western Anglo-Saxon perspective. We like to lead up to things and to have the buildup to a point of great tension in the story and the climax and then the denouement where everyone lives happily ever after. Well, that wasn't the Semitic way.

They would paint in the broad background and tell you the large picture, and then they would zero in, come back and amplify. So it's really a shame that so much wasted ink has been spilt on the JEDP source critical theories of the Pentateuch and so forth. It just reflects a gross misunderstanding of the way Hebrews told a story.

So it says here in verse 5 that these are separated into their lands according to their languages, according to their families, and to their nations. This is a reminder to us, this is the purpose for chapter 10. How did everybody get to be where they are? What are the possible explanations? We've already seen that a lot of the purpose of Genesis for Israel as a nation is to explain to them how they came to be.

What is our national origin? We have school children take American histories so that ostensibly Americans know where our country came from, what our principles are, our founding principles. What did the founding fathers have in mind when our nation came into being? It's important so that those things can be preserved. This is the history, this is the background for the nation of Israel to understand who they are, where they came from, and how they relate to the other peoples in the earth that they're aware of.

This explains a lot to us about why chapter 10 and 11 are as they are here. So verse 5 is really a purpose statement. This is explaining, these are where the far-flung peoples came from, the Gentiles.

And we're going to find out how they were separated into their lands and their languages, their families, and their nations. Then in verse 6, the sons of Ham were Cush, Mitsrayim, Put, and Canaan. You realize that here we have the southern peoples.

Cush is Ethiopia, it's translated Ethiopia, other places in scripture, we'll see this a little bit later. Mitsrayim is in fact the Hebrew, it's transliterated here, but in other places we find it translated as Egypt or Egyptians. Put is again a southern, North African region adjacent to Egypt.

And Canaan, of course Canaan is the land to the east of the Mediterranean Sea, which is ultimately going to be the land of promise and the land of residence for the nation of Israel. Gives us the sons of Cush, Seba, Havilah, Sabta. You remember Havilah was mentioned in the early part of Genesis in connection with the Garden of Eden as a region.

Sabta, Rahama, Sabteka, the sons of Rahama were Sheba and Dedan. Interestingly, Abraham is going to have some grandsons named Sheba and Dedan. Might be some confusion, so it's explained here that these are in fact Hamitic peoples, and the grandsons of Abraham are by definition Semitic.

So you have interchange of names, just as we have seen in the lines of Cain and Seth earlier, where you could have people of differing origin with the same names. Same thing is happening here. Cush begot Nimrod.

This is a highly significant statement in verse 8. Cush is a son of Ham. Nimrod is descended from Ham. Nimrod is Hamitic.

He began to be a mighty one, a gibur, a champion in the earth. He was a mighty hunter

before the Lord. Therefore it is said, like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord.

This phrase, before the Lord, is a superlative. It is not so much that God or the eyes of God are in view here as this is a way of expressing greatness. It was a common phrase.

He was so great that even it came up before God, he was so great. It is an idea of expressing magnitude or exceeding greatness. And there was a phrase that had come down.

We have lots of these little idioms and phrases. It's great to get these books that explain where some of our strange catchphrases come from. Why do we say, give someone the cold shoulder and this sort of thing? You stop thinking about what exactly is a cold shoulder.

Well, we have these phrases. Well, this is a statement or a phrase that was used. This guy was great.

He was like Nimrod, the mighty hunter in the earth. Well, here is the origin of that. And the beginning of his kingdom was battle.

Erek, Akkad, and Kalna in the land of Shinar. Well, once again, this is foreshadowing what we are going to see in Genesis chapter 11. You will find in the beginning of chapter 11 that we are going to see more about the plain of Shinar and the beginning kingdom, Babel.

But this gives us its origin. Was it Semitic? Was it Japhitic? No, it is Hamitic. And this is warning music.

You heard me talking about warning music in the last week or two. Well, this connection with Ham bodes ill. Nimrod's mightiness as a hunter is underscored with warning music.

Babel, Erek, Akkad. Of course, the Akkadian branch of language that is prevalent in the ancient Near East. Akkadian is related linguistically to Hebrew and to Arabic.

There have been caches of clay tablets found in Akkadian. And these have shed light on some obscurities in Hebrew for us. From that land, he, Nimrod, went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Kala, and Rezin between Nineveh and Kala, that is the principal city.

Once again, you have your great Assyrian capitals of later times. We know about Nineveh from the Jonah story. And these great areas of strength in the north, to the north of Israel, are here described and their origins are given.

So the northern and the eastern. Of course, you have the sea on the west. So, Israel as a nation is going to be primarily concerned with who is to my south, who is to my east, and who is to my north.

And these genealogical descriptions, or these table of nation descriptions here, give the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, information that is useful. This is more than just a happy little roster of descendants. It's practical.

What is going to be your basis of approach to the differing nations, the various nations that surround you? What's going to be your attitude toward the Canaanites when you are commanded by God to go in and attack and seize the land of Canaan and drive out and slaughter the Canaanites? What will be your attitude toward various nations when they approach, either in battle or suing for peace or desiring treaties? What is going to be your initial take, your initial attitude toward these kingdoms? Well, this is information that's helpful. If they're from the Hamitic peoples, warning music is going to sound when the ambassador comes calling and saying, We're greatly in sympathy with you. We are happy to have you aboard here.

We'd like to have friendly relations and commerce and so forth. Being neophytes in terms of being a nation, how are the Israelites going to respond? What's going to help them get off the ground here? In the early days of the human race, God provided aid in the form of the angelic judges who guided and gave information to help the fledgling human race get off the ground. This information in the early chapters of Genesis does the same thing for the nation of Israel.

Here you've got your first few kings, your first few members of government in Israel. There's a lot of nations around there. They've been slaves for 400 years in Egypt.

What do they know of international intrigue and the relations between nations and so forth? These scriptures give them practical guidance on how wary, how cautious to be in alliances. What does Noah say in his dying words up in 9, 26 and 27? Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem. May Canaan be his servant.

If you've got Semitic peoples, Semitic descendants who are cousins to Israel, the God of Shem has something of a more positive attitude in these areas because they're descended from Shem and we know that God honors descendants of faithful fathers. He says, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. If he says he's the God of Shem, then you're going to be looking more kindly on your cousins who are descended from Shem, who has a good relationship with God and a blessing pronounced on them from God.

Same thing in verse 27 of chapter 9. May God enlarge Japheth, may he dwell in the tents of Shem. Are you going to be more likely to have alliance and friendly cohabitation with Japhitic peoples or with Hamitic peoples? You're going to be more kindly disposed toward the Japhethites because they're not under the curse. They're under the blessing.

So, these identifications don't mean a whole lot to us. We have difficulty identifying exactly where some of these regions and who some of these peoples were, but they

were very real to the Israelites and this gave them practical information as they get off the ground as a nation. Who are you going to be suspicious of? Who are you going to feel more free to go in and divide and conquer and spoil? God gives the information here and it's personified in the early progenitors and in their attitude toward God.

These nations are linked to their fathers in the same way that Jesus will later link people spiritually. The Pharisees will say, you are of your father the devil. You bear out and live out these attitudes.

And so, when Israel finds these nations living out the degeneracy and the depravity of their forebears and seeing the link to that curse, this gives them information on how to function as a nation. So, you have Nimrod here who is a Hamite and you have Babel and Assyria. The Babylonian Assyrians are going to be the scourge nations God will use much later in the history of the nation of Israel to discipline them.

What an embarrassment that it is the cursed nations. It is the nations who were supposed to be the servants of servants who wind up being the lords over Israel. This is a profound shame to Israel that they have so far strayed from the destiny and from the blessing that God pronounced as far back as Noah.

And it is a reminder to us that even though we have been qualified as heirs and qualified as partakers of the things pertaining to Christ, His sonship, His heirship, His priesthood, His destiny, His election, His ruling authority, through disobedience, through apathy, through indifference, we can wind up just like the nation of Israel. The blessing is conditioned on faith. It is conditioned on obedience.

It is conditioned on pursuit. The desire to fulfill that destiny has to be present. It isn't automatic.

And we see this developing even in these early chapters of Genesis. And this is a warning to the fledgling nation and to the people in it. Beware.

You have the descendants of Mizraim in verse 13 of Genesis chapter 10. It is a reminder that the Philistines and those of Kaphtor, these in some way have migrated across the sea and will eventually become the Sea Peoples. Canaan begot Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth.

The Jebusite, Amorite, Girgashite, Hivite, Archite, and Sinite. These, of course, are the firstborn. There are famous lists of ites that the Israelites will later be charged with annihilating in the land of Canaan.

What should the Israelites' attitude be toward these peoples? Not good. However, there are wonderful exceptions on an individual basis. We know that there are Jebusites who are excluded from the curse because they turn to God.

Arana, who owns the threshing floor where David will eventually lay out the plans for the temple, is a Jebusite. Ornan is a Jebusite. There are other Jebusites.

It's very interesting that their names are non-Semitic. Arana and Ornan and some of the other famous Jebusites in the Bible, their names don't have Semitic roots. It's because they are a Hamitic people.

On the other hand, some of the others, such as the Hittites, the Hittites, because of their location, wind up speaking a Semitic language. You find your Hittites often having very Semitic names. So there's, as always, going to be an intermingling and an adopting of different cultures.

We have people in the United States today who racially are quite remote from our Anglo-Saxon beginnings, or some people would view it as our Native American beginnings. The white people here themselves don't speak Indian languages. And many of the people from foreign lands, as they should, now speak English with all of its quirky roots.

So you go on with your verse 18, the Arvidites, Semerites, Hamathites. Afterward, the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. So we had the Jephitic, who are the most distant, given first, and it says they were divided by their languages, their families, their nations, and so forth.

Now you have the families of the Canaanites mentioned as being dispersed in verse 18. Then in verse 19, you have something very interesting. The border of the Canaanites was from... Now we didn't get any borders for the Jephitic peoples or for the other Hamites.

But in verse 19, the border of the Canaanites is given. Sidon, as you go to Jerar, as far as Gaza, then as you go towards Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma, Zeboim, as far as Lasha. This is a general sketch that gives a very rough outline of the border of the Canaanites.

Now, why do you suppose this is here? What is God doing by giving Israel this information? What are the borders of the Canaanites significant for? Well, it is the land of Canaan that is going to be the land of promise for Abraham. It is going to be the land which will be much more specifically outlined in terms of its borders in later passages of the Word of God. But even here, in the earliest days, God says, let me just remind you, here is the area of the Canaanites.

Why? Who is the curse pronounced on? Canaan. Who is going to be the servant of servants to his brethren? Canaan. Why is Israel, as a nation, going to be justified in going in and driving out, slaughtering the Canaanites? The Canaanites, their women, their children, all of these little Arkites, Hivites, Gergeshites, the justification for this is given in Genesis chapter 10, Genesis chapter 11, and Genesis chapter 9, in whose hands now is judgment.

It is in man's hands. Nation is going to rise up against nation. Nations will be used as scourges in God's hand to discipline, to judge, to eradicate evil on the face of the earth.

Israel is being forewarned here and being taught the principle of justice and judgment on a national level. This is the big change from before the flood to after the flood that we have noted. And Israel has to recognize their role as a scourge nation for other evil nations.

And the roots of the Canaanite degeneracy are traced here and the justification for the command that God will later give. Some people just don't even like to read parts of the Old Testament because it's too shocking. How can a loving, compassionate, beneficent God tell the Israelites go in and hack and slash, kill the women, kill the babies, kill the animals for heaven's sake? Why do they have to kill the animals? The principle of judgment, the distasteful job of executing judgment on sin and on evil has been placed in man's hands.

Why is it that we today are required to inflict capital punishment? It's distasteful. We don't like it. We like to try to find a way around it.

Let's just incarcerate them. If the desire is to get them away from us, well, we can just lock them up. We learn something when justice and judgment are placed in our hands.

We learn that although it is exceedingly uncomfortable and distasteful, it is a nasty, depressing job. But we find out that this is the way God feels about it. God does not delight in judging the wicked.

God does not take pleasure in discipline and in judgment in any form. And we come to know this because now God has delegated this responsibility to us. It was not and should not be a pleasant task for Israel to go in and slaughter these degenerate peoples in the land of Canaan.

But that is their divinely assigned task. And in executing that task, you read all of the anti-war literature and the horrors of war and the terrible suffering and pain and horror of it. That should tell us something.

It reminds us, God does not want to have to do that sort of thing himself either. The scripture tells us repeatedly, God does not delight in judgment, even judgment of the wicked. But it is necessary.

And we find out the necessity of it both when we see the divine action in history as recorded in the scripture and in cases such as today where we have failed miserably to follow the divine pattern of executing justice and judgment and are suffering the consequences. You hear the stories about prison overcrowding and rampant crime and so forth because our justice system is in a shambles. We find, as the angels do and as the human race does, that although exceedingly unpleasant, these judgments are

necessary.

It's required if you're going to have any sort of order, any sort of environment for righteousness to exist. They cannot coexist. If you compromise and allow them to coexist, there is confusion, chaos, and erosion of all of the things that are most important in terms of divine presence and divine relationship.

So we find these things already being built into the fabric of the national consciousness of Israel. These things teach Israel something. They are going to instinctively recoil from the necessity to go in and massacre these peoples.

What is the justification? Lots of literature and film and so forth has been devoted to the great trauma of people coming back from war traumatized by the violence and the bloodshed and the hacking and slashing that goes on. It's not pretty. What holds your mind together when you're involved in that activity? What keeps you from falling apart and unraveling at the seams like so many people seem to have done? It is the knowledge that you are engaged in a divinely ordained, divinely sanctioned, in fact, divinely commanded function.

It's not pretty. It's not pleasant. But understanding the place that this has in God's plan is what helps us say with David, Blessed be the Lord who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight.

To defend a country and an environment where freedom of worship, freedom to grow, and to practice the righteousness that God requires is safeguarded because of national existence. Those nations that have eroded or disregarded the necessity for worship and righteousness have to be gotten out of the way. That's why you go fight and kill communists.

That's why you go fight and kill oppressors and vindictive dictators and so forth. This is the doctrinal ammunition. This is the word of God in the souls of the Israelites that will fortify them as they march across the Jordan River into the land of Canaan and begin the slaughter that is a part of driving out the evil from the land so that God's presence can be established there.

And as we go forward in the listing of peoples here, you have the borders given of Canaan as we saw, and then in verse 21 you have the Shemites listed. Born to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. Notice once again, Shem is listed as a brother to Japheth.

So you can foresee alliances and peace treaties with the Japhethites. They are more distant. They are not an immediate threat to the national security of Israel.

And you find this echoed later on in the conquest when Joshua and the Israelites go into the land. God specifically tells Joshua the far-off peoples you can make treaties and

alliances with. The near peoples you are to annihilate and destroy.

And then you have the famous deception of the Gibeonites where they pretend to be a far-off people so that they get an alliance. And they become the hewers of wood and haulers of water. But once again we have the brotherhood of Japheth pointed out in verse 21.

This is important information for Israel. The sons of Shem who are the Elam, Asher, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. The sons of Aram, Uz, Hul.

See there, the Huls are right here in the earliest times. I'm very glad to find this out as being listed amongst the good guys here. We take great comfort.

Gether and Mash. Arphaxad begot Salah and Salah begot Eber. To Eber were born two sons.

The name of one was Peleg for in his days the earth was divided. His brother's name was Joktan. Joktan.

You have Almodad, Shaleph, Hazarmaveth, Jireh, Haderim, Uzal. Most... You can wade into the scholarly literature. Basically we don't know who a lot of these peoples are.

They were in existence and were known to Israel at the time that they emerged from Egypt. They have since disappeared in the mist and dust of ancient history. Why are they recorded here? These scriptures were in the hands of the nation of Israel.

Who are my friends? Who are my enemies? With whom can I safely and willingly enter into alliance? With whom should I be cautious? Should I look askance? Should I maintain separation and distance from at the national level? The specific information is given to Israel in these passages and it is based on origin. God after the flood is now dividing where man has dealt with universally before the flood. Now he is going to be dealt with at a national level.

A nation interacts with nation. A nation can be a blessing or a nation can be a scourge. Verse 30.

The dwelling place from Misha as you go towards Sephar, the mountain of the east. These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations. You have that same language repeated that was used of the Japhethites and to a lesser extent the Hamites.

Then in verse 32, once again we have this summarized. These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations, and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood. Why are things the way they are? Israel asks.

Here is the answer. This is the necessary setting and background which will now be

amplified and given in greater detail in chapter 11 where on the pattern of Genesis 1 and 2 we have a closer inspection now of exactly how these nations and languages came into being. This is obviously a good place to stop and take our break.

When we return, we will take a close look at this very famous episode of the Tower of Babel and we'll see some things here that I think will be helpful to us. Let's pause and take a break.