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Sermon Notes

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## **Noah's Sons: The Origin and Spread of the Nations** **Genesis 9:18-10:32**

### I. A Picture of Cultures in Heaven

***Revelation 7:9-10*** “*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”*

***Isaiah 60:1,3, 10-11*** “*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you... Nations will come to your light, kings to the brightness of your dawn.... Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you... Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of nations—their kings led in triumphal procession.”*

A. Glorious vision of heaven... full of the glory of all nations, languages, peoples & tribes

B. Part of God's redemption plan from the foundation of the world

***Revelation 5:9*** “*You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”*

C. BUT where did all these nations come from? How did all these languages originate? Two remarkable & overlooked sections of Genesis 9-11 seek to answer these questions

D. Scattering of peoples

***Acts 17:26*** “*From one man, he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”*

**vs. 18-19** *“The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.”*

E. Different cultures, different peoples... struggles, wars, conflicts... SIN a part of the developing story of the nations BUT so also is God’s redemptive plan

**Habakkuk 2:14** *“For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*

## II. A New World, An Old Problem: SIN (9:18-23)

A. Last week: God’s covenant faithfulness

1. Promise to spare the world from judgment by flood
2. Cleansing from sin
3. BUT sin entered the ark with each of the eight people

B. Noah’s sin: Drunkenness

1. Description: a man of the soil
2. Planting a vineyard
  - a. unusual Hebrew expression
  - b. “commenced to” or perhaps, was the first to plant a vineyard
3. Wine
  - a. fermentation & corruption
  - b. consistent warnings against drunkenness

**Proverbs 20:1** *“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.”*

**Proverbs 23:29-32** *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.”*

c. YET Jesus changed the water into wine! And the Bible speaks of wine positively

***Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek, priest of God most high, brought out bread and wine as an offering to Abraham***

***Psalm 104:15 “[God gives] wine that gladdens man’s heart”***

4. Noah got drunk... drinking to excess

***Ephesians 5:18 “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”***

- a. debauchery = dissipation, loss of faculty
- b. result: nakedness
- c. link to original sin

Adam & Noah both given mandate to fill the earth

Adam took the forbidden fruit, resulting in nakedness, clothed by someone else

Noah took the fermented fruit, resulting in nakedness, clothed by someone else

C. Biblical honesty: all its heroes are sinners... except ONE!!

1. Noah was a godly man
2. Radically obedient to God
3. YET he was still a sinner
4. Consistent pattern of Bible... totally honest about the sins of its heroes
  - Abraham: deceptive about Sarah, impatient w.r.t. Hagar
  - Jacob: deceiver, con artist
  - David: adulterer, murderer
  - Disciples: consistently unbelieving, not understanding
  - Peter: three times denied knowing Christ
5. Noah stood consistently against sin for hundreds of years... now let his guard down

***1 Peter 5:8 “Be self-controlled and alert; your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”***

Only Jesus alone has ever passed through this world of temptation without ever once sinning

D. Incredible stubbornness of sin

Alister Beg’s description:

1. The contagion to be spread through Noah
2. The contagion also spread through Noah’s sons

E. Ham, father of Canaan (vs. 22)

1. Ham “gazed at” his Father, taking delight in the scene
2. Runs and tells his brothers... “tells with delight”; like sharing great news
3. Ham’s sin... not perversion, but rebellion

Morris: “A much more probable interpretation of Ham’s actions here is that they expressed a long-hidden resentment of his father’s authority and moral rectitude. There was apparently a carnal and rebellious bent to Ham’s nature, thus far restrained by the spiritual strength and patriarchal authority of his father. Now beholding the evidence of his father’s human weakness before his very eyes, he rejoiced, no doubt feeling a sense of release from all the inhibitions which had until now suppressed his own desires and ambitions.” Hence he runs to tell his brothers...

4. Sin nature chafes for freedom... restless, wants to express itself; sin of others promotes our own freedom

***1 Corinthians 13:6 “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”***

F. Shem and Japheth: salt and light

1. Stand against Ham’s delight
2. Reverently upheld father’s dignity
3. Upheld righteousness, moral standard... salt & light

### III. Noah's Prophecy (9:24-29)

#### A. "Cursed be Canaan"

1. Noah's outrage results in a prophetic curse
2. BUT... why Canaan, not Ham
  - a. Sin passed from generation to generation
  - b. As my youngest son shamed me, so will your youngest son shame you
  - c. ALSO: Canaan's corruption patterned after his worldly father
  - d. Finally, Canaan would occupy the land later meant for God's chosen people

#### B. Canaan's curse: a servant of servants

1. Canaan's carnal nature was itself a form of bondage
2. Canaan's god would be his stomach... thus would he serve his brothers
3. Even more... foreshadowing of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land

#### C. Shem's blessing

1. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem
2. Blessings come to all who follow the Lord
3. Anything good coming to Shem come b/c his allegiance to the Lord
4. Shem is elect, chosen by the Lord, from Shem would come the Christ
5. Canaan will be his slave

#### D. Japheth's blessing

1. Play on words... "Japheth" sounds like "May [he] extend..."
2. "Tents of Shem" imply all blessing coming to Japheth come from his relationship to Shem
3. Similar to Abrahamic promise

***Genesis 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."***

4. Canaan will be his slave as well

NOTE: some have used this curse to show that one group or tribe will be permanently and rightly subjected to slavery... but this forgets that, 1) Canaan's curse was connected to his perversion... all sin leads to slavery; 2) in Christ, all such national distinctions are irrelevant

***Colossians 3:11 "Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all."***

E. Humanity's curse: death (9:28-29)

***vs. 28-29 "After the flood, Noah lived 350 years. Altogether Noah lived 950 years, and then he died."***

1. Picking up the drone of death from Genesis 5
2. The flood is over, but sin and death persist

#### IV. The Table of Nations (10:1-32)

Extraordinary document!! William F. Albright, universally acknowledged as the world's leading expert on the archaeology of the Ancient Near East said:

***"[Genesis 10] stands alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework.... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document."***

A. Three major headings, one clear message

1. Lineage from Japheth
2. Lineage from Ham
3. Lineage from Shem

Central message: unity of entire human race... all nations descended from one man, all nations under Noah's blessing

Ultimately, all nations blessed through Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ

Modern focus on “race” forfeits our unity, leads to tribalism that results in wars

B. God’s Sovereign Plan

1. Covering of the earth with His glory
2. Full unfolding of the rich variety of the image of God
3. Individual blessings given to each group

***Acts 17:26 “From one man, he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”***

***Deuteronomy 32:8 “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.”***

***Deuteronomy 2:9 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’”***

Can modern nations be found in Genesis 10?

C. Japheth

1. Japheth’s sons
  - Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, & Tiras
  - Morris: “we can trace most of these names and recognize them as ancestors of the Indo-European peoples.”
2. Japheth: the founder of Greece??
  - a. Iapetos father of the Greeks in Greek mythology
  - b. Iyapeti: reputed ancestor of the Aryans in India
3. Gomer: identified by Herdotus & Plutarch with region of Cimmeria, north of Black Sea... modern Crimea
4. Magog = “the place of Gog”... Josephus says Magog was ancestor of the Scythians in the Black Sea area

- a. associated with Meshech & Tubal
- b. Ezekiel's prophecy

***Ezekiel 38:2 “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal...”***

- c. identified as origins of the modern Russian peoples
5. Madai = identified by all authorities as ancestor of the Medes... Persia, modern Iran
  6. Javan
    - a. Tarshish = port to which Jonah was fleeing
    - b. associated with maritime peoples
    - c. like Noah, these peoples made boats, travelled to their regions
    - d. dispersion was AFTER the tower of Babel

***10:5 “...each with its own language.” 11:1 “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.”***

**Conclusion: Japhethites went northward, settling modern Europe**

D. The Hamites

1. Cush & Mizraim = origins of Egyptian peoples
  - Cush is usually “Ethiopia”
  - Mizraim is Hebrew word for Egypt... dual form implies upper & lower Egypt

***Psalm 105:23 “Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.”***

2. Raamah, Cush's son... settled in Arabia

***Isaiah 21:13 “An oracle concerning Arabia: You caravans of Dedanites, who camp in the thickets of Arabia...”***

3. Nimrod... Cush's descendant
  - a. mighty warrior
  - b. mighty hunter before the Lord



Note: perhaps with less vegetation to eat, animals more frequently attacked humans... humans also ate meat now

c. Nimrod built powerful cities:

Babylon and others in Shinar

Assyrian cities of Nineveh

A man of tremendous power and leadership ability

d. name means “rebel”... perhaps another one of these powerful tyrant kings

4. Mizraim also father of Philistines... but none of these other peoples have been identified

5. Canaanites

a. very familiar to us

b. these are the nations Joshua drove out from the Promised Land

c. also, these were those who settled in Sodom and Gomorrah

E. The Semites (vs. 21-31)

1. Elect by God... Christ would come from them

2. Five sons: one elect, four non-elect (for Christ’s physical lineage)

3. The non-elect

a. Elam = Elamites

- Lived in mountainous region east of Tigris-Euphrates Valley

- Gen. 14: Abraham routed a coalition of kings; king of Elam among them

b. Asshur = possibly the Assyrians (but already mentioned in Ham’s lineage, vs. 11)

c. Lud = perhaps related to Lydia, near Ephesus in Asia Minor

d. Aram = Arameans, Greeks called them Syrians... consistent adversaries of Israel... blinded by God during Elishah’s time

4. The elect: Arphaxad

a. grandson was Eber... from which we get “Hebrew”

- b. Eber's two sons: Joktan & Peleg
- c. Peleg: during his time, the earth was divided
  - Maybe Tower of Babel division through language

***Psalm 55:9 "Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech."***

- Perhaps also division of stream of nations culturally

***Job 38:25 "Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm...?"***

- Peleg was elect... ancestor of Christ

- d. Joktan's sons listed in detail... identified as tribes who lived in south Arabia

- Genesis concludes with special listing of their homeland

***vs. 30 "The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country."***

- Shows importance author placed on the tribes of Shem
- HOWEVER no one knows where these places are today

5. Concluding colophon:

Just like verses 5 & 20, author concludes account of Shem's lineage with statement :

***vs. 31 "These are the sons of Shem, by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations."***

Final summary:

***vs. 32 "These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood."***

V. Application

## 1. Universality of sin

- Noah walked with God, obeyed Him radically, was alone in his generation in his purity
- One of the greatest men in the Old Testament

***Ezekiel 14:14 “...even if these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were in it, they could only save themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord.”***

- YET he got drunk and brought shame on himself
- Also: Noah’s son Ham, and Ham’s son Canaan were sinners, carrying on the distressing lineage of sin from generation to generation

***Romans 3:10 “There is no one righteous, not even one!”***

## 2. Unity of humanity

- All of humanity is descended from one man Adam
- So also all of humanity is descended from one man, Noah
- Racial tensions, loyalty to one’s own kind is evidence of sin
- All peoples equally created in the image of God

## 3. Unfolding of God’s plan

- God is delighted with variety of humanity and culture
- God wants the earth filled

***Habakkuk 2:14 “For the earth will be filled the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”***

- Someday, even the distant islands will declare the glory of God through faith in Christ

***Isaiah 42:1-4 “Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on Him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out or raise His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.... In His law the islands will put their hope.”***

- This Servant of the Lord is Jesus Christ, and God's plan was unfolding through this genealogy as well... descended from Shem through Peleg would come the Savior of the world
- The "Serpent-slayer", the Seed of the woman was now that much closer to His advent

One of Africa's oldest proverbs--"When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled"-- couldn't be better suited for the slaughter of Central Africa. How can one of the tiniest, lushest countries in Africa become one of the largest killing fields in the world?

Tribalism.

Rwanda, like neighboring Burundi, is a rather simple (for most African states) hybrid of two tribes: the Hutus and the Tutsis. A four-year uprising made minor headlines every time Tutsi guerrillas would infringe on the territory of Rwanda's famous silverback gorilla families. When full-scale war broke out after the death of Burundi's and Rwanda's leaders in a plane crash, the majority Hutu tribe blamed the minority Tutsis and began indiscriminately slaughtering them. But the surprise success of the ragtag Tutsi rebels transformed them from freedom fighters into outright butchers. The Hutu-controlled government has been replaced by Tutsi rebels, and the wholesale massacre started being directed at the Hutus.

Now waves of refugees have been making tentative explorations homeward from eastern Congo (at least those who have not been slaughtered by Congo president Laurent Kabila's mostly Tutsi forces) under the auspices of the U.N. Estimates put the Tutsi fatality toll at more than a million in the last few decades, and the number of refugees at more than twice that figure. The genocide in this decade has topped 1 million dead. Almost half of Rwanda's population of 8 million fled during the hostilities in April 1993; 10,000 per minute at its peak crossed the borders.

Rwandan leader Major-General Paul Kagame is trying to bring the refugees back, particularly the Hutus, who fled the country en masse after Kagame's Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) came to power in 1994. Kagame has ordered the execution of any soldier who kills a civilian. That he's serious was evidenced by the 1116 Tutsi soldiers jailed by Kagame in 1996. Eighty of them were officers--most facing murder charges. There are 90,000 people in prison in Rwanda awaiting trial in connection with slaughter.

For refugees returning from eastern Congo, though, there is no guarantee of safety. Former neighbors have turned hostile. Some returnees are ostracized, some accepted, some murdered. Returning Hutus are being shot as war criminals.

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