

Genesis Chapters 10-11 Summary - John Karmelich

A bible teaching mentor once said, "I find the hardest book in the bible to teach is Genesis, not because it's hard to understand, but because the scope is so wide, it's hard to get one's arms around it". I wanted to open with that thought, because it reminds me why God called me to this ministry: It's for Christians who are saved to ponder "now what". In these chapters we get the famous Tower of Babel story. How do we apply that story to our lives? While we are contemplating that question, realize in essence, these two chapters are a bridge from Noah to Abraham, key historical figures, that God wants us to grasp the significance of them. There is a long time-period between those two. These chapters are mostly names of people who settled in the Middle East and became nations. To make it easy I put a map at the end of this lesson to show where these people settled! In essence, everybody moved after God "wrecked" that famous Tower of Babel project (Chapter 11) where God told people to scatter! Why is this story in the bible, why does God want us to know this stuff? I'll get to that in a minute!

Speaking of the Tower of Babel, it's located in Babylon. Every now and then I like to joke that in effect the Bible is a "Tale of Two Cities" (to borrow from Dickens)! Genesis discusses Babylon's origin, as well as a brief mention of Jerusalem! Revelation explains the eternal future of both places. Babylon's a key topic in this lesson, so I'll talk a little about its origin here! The question of the moment is why did God wreck the Babel project as opposed to other bad things? The text states Babylon's was founded by a ruthless leader, a descendant of the guy that Noah cursed (in the last lesson)! In effect he organized a rebellion against God. Remember God told Noah and his family, to scatter, fill the earth and multiply! The Tower of Babel project was essentially a "stick your finger in God's eye" that we won't scatter. By God confusing people's ability to speak, (which He does in the story), it's the reminder that He is not to be messed with! I don't expect God to do something every time a nonbeliever defies Him, but I realize the eternal fate of turning from Him forever! This story is a reminder of a classic quote, "Your arms are too short to box with God"! With that said, let me continue:

Realize that most of the text of these chapters is a list of names. It is mostly male names and obviously they needed wives to populate the earth. Therefore, these chapters are not a complete list of names, just specific people. It's a reminder that a purpose of these chapters is to connect the family lineage of Noah to Abraham. It is a reminder that all of us came from Noah's family, saved and unsaved. If you have a good familiarity with the bible, you'll recognize many of the names given on the chart I placed after the text of this lesson. Many of those names are the basis for the nations located at those places. You don't have to memorize this list to be saved. It's just for us to realize we all descended from Noah and here's how the "ball got rolling". I'm also sure Chapters 10 and 11 overlap as many of the people were united in one spot (Babylon) before God made it clear to scatter! I picture God saying, "When I say scatter & multiply, I'm not kidding!" It's easier to look at the map (below), than to list all those names written in these chapters and what nations they started! So, there it is!

Again, most of Chapter 10 is just a list of names but a few points are worth noting. If you recall Noah's curse was on his grandson Cush in Chapter 9. (Lots of Jewish legends about why, but that's speculation and we'll leave it at that!) Cush was the father of Nimrod. He was a hunter (as in hunter of men)! He's the one who led the effort to build the tower of Babel. Apparently, he was responsible for the cities of both Babylon and Nineveh (both of which had empires and God used them to destroy the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel on different dates!) Nineveh, home of the Assyrian Empire was destroyed by the Babylonians, but Babylon still exists, and Saddam Husain rebuilt parts of it before he died! That

reminds me, Babylon is mentioned prominently in Revelation, I hold the view that literal Babylon will hold some role in the end times, but it's just my opinion!

Anyway, besides that the Chapter is all names and the map at the end of this lesson is much easier than a list of all names in order. Also note in Verse 25 someone named Peleg. The text says in his day that's when the earth was divided, which refers to God scattering the nations in Chapter 11.

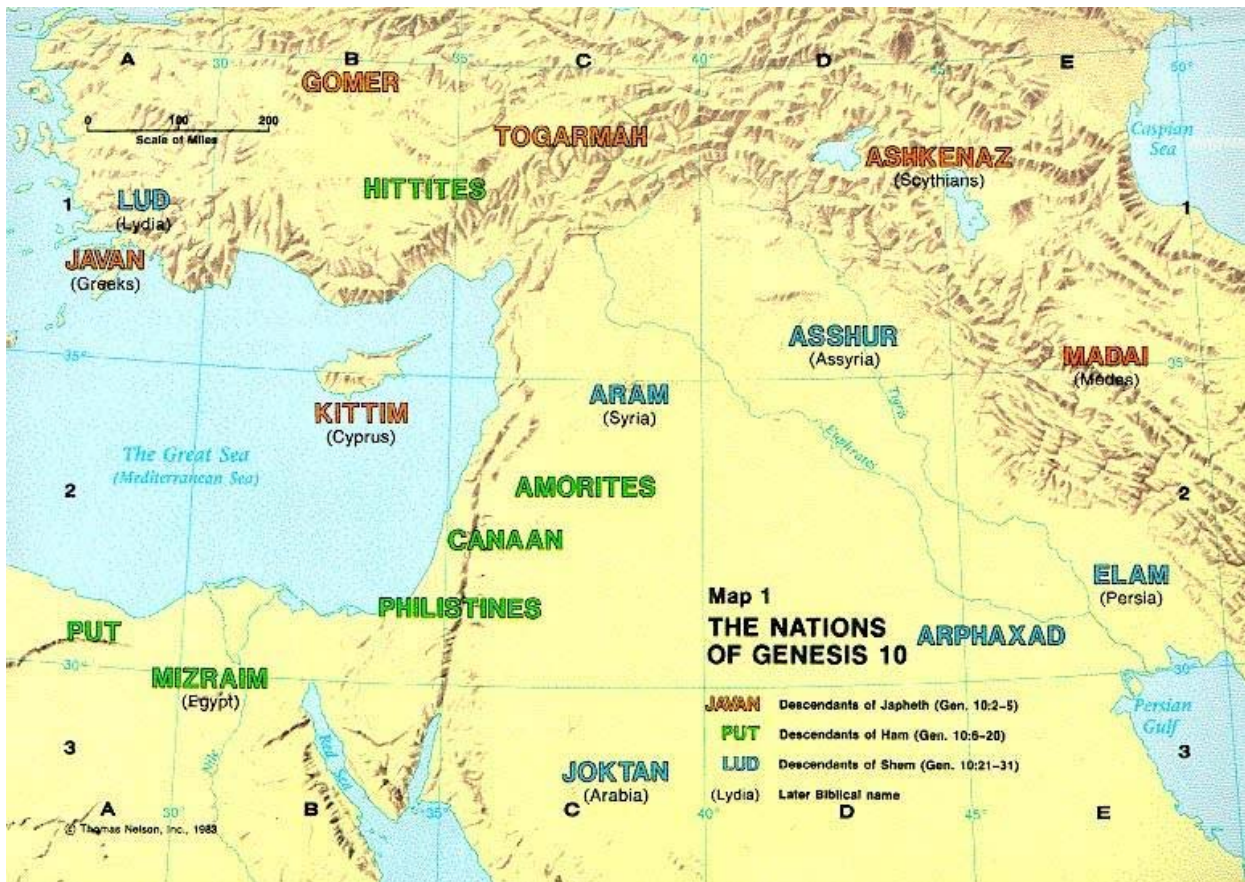
Speaking of Chapter 11, it opens with the Tower of Babel story. It's almost as if God is saying I'll take a break from this boring list of names to tell you a fun story! We are told burned bricks were used as a building block (burning them preserves them). The people who built them obviously didn't expect that tower to reach heaven. The point is they built in defiance of God's orders to scatter. So why did God stop that, versus a lot of other bad things in human history? One reason is God wanted people to live in the land of Israel when Abraham will show up there in Chapter 12! I always think of God as the entity that wants to accomplish His goals on His timing, and we must accept that! Yes, the scattering effort is about defying His orders (a good lesson for us)! It's also reminds us that God's desire is for us to do His will and on His timing!

After that whole disaster, we get back to more names. The last time Genesis had a genealogy, (back in Chapter 6), it stated this guy "had sons and daughters and lived x number of years". Here we don't get life spans, just the key person who came after them! Realize a key point of these two chapters is to get us from Noah to the "Patriarchs" of God's chosen people (Abraham Isaac and Jacob)! We'll spend a lot of chapters on each one assuming nothing horrible happens to me!

One of the points that Genesis doesn't make clear but the New Testament does (Stephen's death speech in Acts Chapter 7, Verse 4) is that Abraham's father Terah was to take Abraham his wife Sarah and his grandson Lot, (not Abraham's son) to the land of Israel (called the land of Canaan at this point), but the group settled in Haran (in what is Turkey today). The Genesis text never specifies if God wanted Terah to end up in Canaan (as it was God's intent). Just that he failed to do so. Again, Genesis wants us to go from Noah to Abraham and that meant moving the story from "Turkey" (where the ark rested) to Israel the focal location of the rest of the book of Genesis.

OK John, interesting ancient history. Why should we care? What does this have to do with our faith in Jesus? First the fact that God scattered people and confused the language of the "Babel" people is a reminder that we as believers are called to obedience. That means the purpose of our lives is to make a difference for God. Yes, many of us are called to "move" to places God wants us to be witness, but it's also true many of us are called to be a witness for God where we are! A key point is to remember God is "calling the shots" in the sense He has a plan for the world and His plan is still moving at His pace as He wants it to occur. Our choice is to be part of the "winning team" and use our lives to glorify Him or just ignore our salvation and live out our lives as we see best! If you got no idea what God wants to do with your life, pray for guidance. I'm sure that no prayer is more likely to be answered than one of total surrender of our will for His! In the meantime, pray for guidance daily keep studying His Word as it is our guide as to what the God who created us desires of us!

With that said, I'll end it here other than the map that's worth a 20 second "glance" before finishing for the week! Thanks as always, John



With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John