

## Beginnings: What's in a Name? Genesis 10-11

### Seeking a Name

- The Tower of Babel story is preceded by “Table of Nations” in chapter 10.
    - The genealogies in chap. 10 are not in birth order but “emphasis order” with Shem last.
    - There are 70 names in the list, symbolically representing the whole world.
      - When Israel went down to Egypt, there were 70 persons.  
*All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were 70. (Gen. 46:27)*
      - God was calling the 70 people to bless the 70 nations.  
*And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:6)*
    - The Bible recognizes ethnicities while also relativizing ethnicities.
      - There is a beautiful and God-ordained diversity in this list.
      - At the same time, there is ultimately one race, the human race.
    - The list shows that God’s Word never fails.  
*[Noah] He also said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup> May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” (Genesis 9:26-27)*
      - The sons of Japheth would be reached one day by the sons of Shem.
      - The sons of Canaan would one day be enemies of the sons of Shem.
    - Genesis 10 happens both before and after the Tower of Babel episode. (see vv. 5, 9, 25)
  - The Tower of Babel shows a A multiplying, migrating, and manufacturing people. (11:1-2)
    - They were told to fill the earth, yet they settled down in opposition.  
*And God... said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” (Genesis 9:1)*
    - We can imagine that they found God’s command uninspiring and unfulfilling.
      - They wanted fame and renown.
      - They hungered for glory and reputation.
- “But let me reveal my heart to you entirely, my friends: if there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god!” (Friedrich Nietzsche)*

June 9: Genesis 12-14

- God opposes the proud.
  - God is not impressed with what impresses our sinful hearts and minds.
  - God actively opposes the use of God-given gifts when those gifts aren't used for good.
    - Reminder: just because something can be done does not mean that something should be done.
    - “Progress” that defies God is not progress at all.
  - The surest way to waste your life is to ignore or defy the God who gave you life.
    - They left off the building the city, demonstrating God's righteous judgment.
    - They (unwillingly) did just as God commanded, demonstrating God's sovereignty.
- Application:
  - We should be mindful of our desires to be godlike.
  - We should be mindful that we cannot outwit or overcome God.

### Receiving a name

- The (resumed) genealogy of Shem leads to the solution and gift of a name. (11:10-32)
  - Shem's genealogy ultimately leads to Abram.
  - Shem, which means *name*, has a son to whom a great name will be given.
 

*Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3)*
- The ultimate fulfillment of that promise to Abram is a distant son of Abram, Jesus Christ.
 

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us... <sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)*

  - In Jesus, the nations are gathered as one. (Acts 2:5-12)
  - Through Jesus, the nations will gather in heaven. (Revelation 5:9-10)
- Application:
  - See how God works quietly and carefully to bring about the glory of His name.
  - See how striving for a name is foolish but how receiving a name is wisdom.