

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 11



RACES in REBELLION

God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

-- Eccl. 7:29 (NKJV)

NEW BEGINNING, OLD MAN (9:18-29)

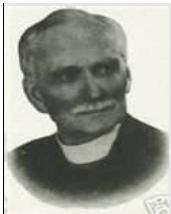
9:18-23 What is revealed as to the "perfection" of Noah? (cf. 6:8,9)

(1) According to some theology, Noah would have been lost at this moment. But according to the eternal covenants of God's grace, Noah was covered by the righteousness of God even when his sinful nature was most clearly visible in all its folly. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *Genesis* p. 65

(2) In this last tragicomic scene, the truth that the "ideas of man's mind are evil from his youth" is starkly exhibited for all to see. Even the most righteous and their offspring may fall from grace in an unguarded moment. And such falls do have long-term consequences, as the curse on Ham's descendants the Canaanites makes clear. Lack of filial piety and sexual indiscretion lead to bondage. -- **G.J. Wenham**, *Genesis* p. 206

9:24,25 For which unholy purpose have these verses been perverted?

(3) It is necessary to right a great wrong at this point. Never in all history, until



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If Ham's descendants were cursed, how do we explain the dominant place of Hamitic peoples among early empires?

the middle of the nineteenth century, did anyone imagine that Ham was the father of the Negro peoples and there was a curse upon him. Prejudiced souls who wished to justify their investments in human flesh resorted to any subterfuge to bolster their untenable position. The Hamites were the Egyptians, Babylonians, Hittites, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Carthaginians; but not the Negroes. Moreover, the curse was pronounced on Ham through one of his sons -- Canaan. Any attempt to make black skin the fulfillment of this curse is unscholarly, prejudiced to the extreme and certainly without basis in the Bible. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op.cit.*, p. 66

9:26-29 What profundity might we carelessly miss in this simple blessing?

(4) Jahveh makes Himself a name in becoming the God of Shem, and thus entwines His name with that of Shem, which means *the name*. ... He is called [YHWH], as the God of salvation, the God of positive revelation, and as such He is the God of Shem. On the other hand He is called, with reference to Japheth, [elohim], which is the more general name of God, especially as the Creator of the world. For Japheth stands in a relation to God chiefly brought about by the light of nature, and delights in the exercise of the natural powers with which man is endowed. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *A New Commentary on Genesis* Vol. 1 p. 296

(5) Shem is the most blessed. Canaan has the curse of servitude three times pronounced upon him. Shem receives a spiritual, Japheth a temporal blessing, and with it the prospect of participation in the spiritual blessing of Shem. The rest of Ham's descendants are left out of consideration, the subsequent promise of blessing to the nations in the seed of the patriarch including them also. Shem is henceforth the centre of sacred history. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *op.cit.*, p. 298

The UNITY and NATURAL EQUALITY of the RACES (10:1-32)

10:1-5 In what sense is Japheth "enlarged"?

(6) The prophecy about Japheth indicates great prosperity and the multiplication of descendants. 'God shall enlarge Japheth.' If the rendering of the English versions is correct that Japheth is to 'dwell in the tents of Shem,' we know that as a matter of fact the Christian Gentile nations have indeed superseded the family of Shem

THE PENDULUM OF POWER AMONG BIBLICAL EMPIRES, & THE EARLY DOMINANCE OF HAM

1. Ham

Mostly pre-1000 BC; early Babylon & Nineveh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Canaan (Phoenicia), Hittites

2. Shem

Almost exclusively 800-539 BC. Late Assyria, Babylonia, Syria

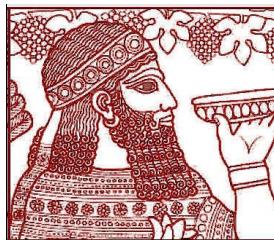
3. Japheth

539 BC to the present; Persia, Greece, Rome

in religious privileges, and have entered upon their inheritance of spiritual blessing and earthly power. It is at least striking that the political control of human affairs is now in the hands of the Japhethic line. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis I-XXV* p. 120

10:6-20 Although Ham is ignored in Noah's blessing, is he therefore cursed? (cf. 9:1-3) In addition to Canaan, what early empires were dominated by Hamites?

(7) The posterity of Ham's children settled in Africa; Cush in Ethiopia; Mizraim in Egypt; Phut in Libya; and Canaan in Palestine. Most worthy of notice is the fact that a descendant of Cush was *Nimrod* 'the rebel,' the father of imperialism, the founder of the first world-empire, *Babylon*, which reached its highest imperial glory under Nebuchadnezzar, the conqueror of Assyria, and the builder of Nineveh (v 11). -- **W. Graham Scroggie**, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* Vol. 1 p. 84



NIMROD
rendered in an early
monument. A
descendant of Ham
and the first great
empire builder

10:21-32 Though Japheth and Ham entered into fleshly blessings before Shem, why is Shem's genealogy kept last?

(8) Nowhere is found a survey of the connection of nations that can be compared with the ethnological table of the Bible, nowhere one so universal in proportion to its horizon, and so all-comprising, at least with regard to its purpose. For the idea of the people of God implies that they have to regard all nations as future partakers with them of the same salvation, and to embrace them with an interest of hopeful love unheard of elsewhere in the ancient world. The invisible foliage of hope is entwined round the dry branches of this register of nations, the hope that the widely diverging paths of the nations will a last meet at a goal appointed by the God of revelation. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *op.cit.*, p. 300

AN UNHOLY UNITY (11:1-9)

11:1-4 While it is apparent from ch.10 that some took the lead in empire building, who gets credit for the rebellion at Babel?

(9) One thing, however, is perfectly clear -- they were filled with a godless ambition. 'Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad.' In view of the fact that the Hebrew word for 'name' is 'shem,' it is not altogether impossible that the suggestion 'to make a *shem*' had in it some covert sneer against the family of Shem, which had been assured of the Divine presence and blessing (chap. ix. 26); and the fear lest they should be scattered abroad is fairly chargeable with distrust in God, Whose purpose it was that they should be dispersed and people the whole earth. He Who commanded them to scatter abroad would not leave them unsafe and unprotected. Altogether, this is a revelation of human sin in the

form of rebellion against God, and it has not been wrongly described as the first organisation of the scheme of godlessness and irreligion. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 136

11:5-9 What is the inherent rebellion in human aspirations after peace, security and unity? (Psalm 127:1)

(10) These words seem to imply that the building of Babel was only intended as the commencement of a further course of rebellion. The gathering of all material forces into one common centre would have led to universal despotism and to universal idolatry, -- in short, to the full development of what as anti-Christ is reserved for the judgment of the last days. -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *Bible History: Old Testament* Vol. 1 p. 61

(11) The tower is vastly different from Jacob's ladder (28:12), the top of which also reached to heaven. In the former the initiative is with man. In the latter the initiative is with God ... The fact that God scatters the builders suggests that more than egoism is involved. Here we see the divine will agitated not only by earthlings who would essay to become deity, but also by a resistant humanity that "prefers the settled security of homogeneity and centralization." The story is an example of "man's futile attempt to gain security apart from God through city-building." -- **Victor P. Hamilton**, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* p. 356

(12) It makes it clear that unity and peace are not ultimate goods: better division than collective apostasy. -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 110

(13) Unity must come from within. When outward unity is attempted the result will be, as in this case, separation, dispersion, confusion. What a lesson we have here in connection with all attempts at church unity. How often churches have attempted to keep Christians together by means of outward elements only or mainly. Sometimes it has been unanimity of opinion, and this has proved impossible. Sometimes it has been uniformity of observance and ceremonial, but this has proved equally futile. Sometimes it has been a unity of organisation, but this has never once succeeded. Unity must be a unity of life, of love, of interest, of intention, of spirit, of service, and this unity can be obtained and maintained amidst a great variety of organisation, of opinion, of ceremonial. ... With the Babel of earth we set in contrast the Jerusalem that is above. To the city of man we oppose the city of God. True unity is always primarily the result of an organism, and only secondarily of an organisation. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, pp. 139,140