

# On the Beginning

## 16. Mankind Divided

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 10:1 - 11:32

We've been seeing that the Book of Genesis is truly the book of *beginnings*! In it, among many other beginnings we find the beginning of the universe, the beginning of life, the beginning of man, the beginning of marriage, the beginning of evil, the beginning of language, the beginning of government, the beginning of religion, and the beginning of nations. After the Great Flood, the nations began which have acted out the drama of history, including God's chosen nation of Israel.

### 1. Where the Nations Originated.

This is the theme of Genesis 10. Of course all of mankind today descended from Noah and his three sons. His son Japheth (vs. 2-5) gave us the "Indo-European" nations. Both the ancient Greeks and the Aryans of India spoke of Japheth as their forefather. The name of his son Gomer is behind the names of places such as Crimea, Germany, and Cambria (Wales). Armenian traditions trace their origins to Togarmah. Meshech's name is preserved in Muskovi (the old name for Russia).

Noah's son Ham gave us the Ethiopians (Cush), the Egyptians (Mizraim), the Libyans (Phut), and (of course) the Canaanites. His grandson Nimrod (Read vs. 6-12) became the first great conqueror and ruler. The Canaanites apparently were very prolific and at one time a very great people (vs. 15-19). The descendants of Heth, for example, were the Hittites and are known to have maintained a powerful empire in Asia Minor for a certain period. There is also reason to think that some of the Hittites ended up migrating to the Far East! The Sinites might also have been very significant in the ancient world. The name is related to Sinai and the Wilderness of Sin. It is also similar to the "Sinim" of Isaiah 49:12, an oriental people. The Chinese have always used "Sino-" as a prefix referring to their people. Some scholars believe that Heth, the son of Canaan, and the Sinites were the ancestors of the great Oriental nations. Note in verse 18 the statement that "*and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad.*" Most of the Canaanite peoples stayed in the land called Canaan, but some of them were "*spread abroad*" to the far corners of the world.

Noah's son Shem was "*the father of all the children of Eber,*" and therefore his family is very important to the spiritual history of man. It is from the name Eber that we get the term "Hebrew." All the nations descended from Shem are described as "Semitic" (vs. 21-31). Which nations were these? Among them were the Elamites, the Assyrians (from Asshur), the Lydians (from Lud), and the Syrians (from Aram). The Arameans (or Syrians) gave the world the Aramaic language (Syriac), used to write parts of the books of Daniel and Ezra, and spoken by the Jews in Palestine at the time of the Lord Jesus! Eber is listed in the line from Shem through Arphaxad and Salah. This is the family line of Christ, which is the focus of attention throughout the Old Testament scriptures. The most significant event of Eber's life was the birth of his son Peleg (which means "division"). "*In his days,*" the Bible says, "*was the earth divided.*" In other words, the division of mankind (described in Genesis 11), took place in Eber's lifetime and it was for this reason that he named his son Peleg.

Before going on to Chapter 11, it would be good to notice two things: (1) mankind in God's mind is not divided into races distinguished by skin-color, and (2) nations developed out of families.

2. How The Nations Were Divided.

At first the families of the sons of Noah lived and worked together as one people (Genesis 11:1). Then something happened that divided mankind into nations as we have seen now for thousands of years. First, let us note that the division of mankind was a *good* thing spiritually. See what Paul said in his famous speech on Mars Hill in Athens.

*“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us . . .”*  
(Acts 17:24-27)

The spirit of antichrist today says that division is bad and that uniting mankind should be our ultimate goal. The Spirit of God says that this horizontal view will corrupt mankind further, and that the vertical view (looking upward to God for help, mercy, and deliverance instead of looking to each other for these things) is good. God’s way is for individuals to seek God rather than for nations to seek to work together for a self-inspired goal.

It all happened because of a project and plans that *left God out* (Read Genesis 11:1-9). God was against it (Look up James 4:6). He always resists projects that leave Him out. He also knows what evil can be done when sinful men conspire to work together instead of seeking Him, His will, and His blessing.

At Babel (later called Babylon) the tongues (languages) of men were confused, and mankind was divided by *language*. Language differences came first, then racial and cultural differences. As groups learned to communicate with each other, they began to mix and to develop races, nations, and cultures.

A new story begins with Genesis 11:10-30. Here we find the background of a man named Abram. Abram is to be distinguished in his purpose of life from the leaders of the project at Babel (including Nimrod—See Genesis 10:6-10). They were *building* a city, but Abram was *seeking* a city built by God! See this in Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16. The city he sought was “*the heavenly Jerusalem*” (Hebrews 12:22). People today are either building a city or seeking a city. They are either laying up treasures on earth or in Heaven. They are either empire-builders on earth or doers of God’s will on earth. These two approaches to life are contrasted throughout the Bible, and symbolized in the book of Revelation by two cities: Babylon and the New Jerusalem.