FAMILY PRACTICE
Home Lessons From Scripture
Genesis 10:1-7 & 10:13-32

Lesson One: The Earth Should Have People Everywhere

In Genesis 9:1&7, God had ordered the sons of Noah (Japheth, Shem & Ham)to make sure that their descendants spread out all over the earth, but as we shall see in Genesis 11, their descendants refused to do so, and all tried to live in the same area instead. After this went on for a while, God forced humanity to spread by confusing the languages of the different families, and so the different families eventually spread and populated the planet.

The earth was created to be the home of humanity, which means that being the home to humanity is the purpose of Earth. Any part of our planet, therefore, that has no people upon it or to look after it is a part of our planet that is missing out on its God-given purpose. While the world may teach us that wilderness is the ideal state of nature, this was not true of the Garden of Eden, for it was a *garden* – which meant that it was planned, manicured, orderly and landscaped. It was not a wild place, and it needed human attention to be all that God intended it to be (Genesis 2:15).

In effect, the Garden of Eden was a model for the rest of Earth, where nature grew wild. Humanity was to spread and bring the greater beauty of Eden to nature through good stewardship (taking care of something on behalf of its true owner – in this case God), as we saw way back in Genesis 1:26&28. This essentially meant two important things: No place on Earth was meant to be off-limits to humanity, and that Earth needs many, many people in order to fulfill its designed purpose.

The first human being (Adam) was a landscaper and gardener, and tended to the beauty of the Garden of Eden. For the rest of us, we are called to see to the populating and beautifying of the rest of our planet, for it needs us to do so.

- Here are some questions that might help your study:
  - What do you think the Garden of Eden looked like?
  - Why did God only make one garden, but leave the rest of Earth wild?
  - What is humanity's responsibility to our planet?
  - Is it important to God that every part of Earth has someone looking after it?
- Here is a passage of Scripture that may help your study:
  - Joshua 13 – 19
    - This passage is lengthy, and so you may want to summarize. It shows that God gave every square inch of the Promised Land to private Israelite citizens. No part was off-limits to human beings, but they were also to treat it with respect (Leviticus 25:4)

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lesson Two: Where Did The Different Human Races Come From?

In this passage the Bible says that we all came from three brothers (Japheth, Shem & Ham), who were all the sons of Noah. If this is true, how come we have different races of people?

It is true that anthropologists tend to classify human beings into three basic races, as follows: Caucasoid, Mongoloid (Asian) and Negroid. However, the Bible makes no such distinction, but in the story of the dispersion of humanity in Genesis chapters 10 & 11 we see how the different-looking peoples came to be, despite the fact that they were all descended from the same three guys, who were brothers.

When God created the world, everything was perfect (Genesis 1:31), including the human genome (all of our DNA stuff). This was one of the reasons that people lived so long in the beginning of the world (Genesis 5), even after the Fall of Genesis 3. Because our genetics were so healthy in those early days of humanity, people could marry their close relatives and not have to worry about having birth defects in their children. By the time of Moses this was no longer the case, and God outlawed such relationships in Leviticus 18:6.

But in the time of Noah's sons and their sons and grandsons, marrying and having children with close family members was still okay (remember, Abraham was married to his half-sister), and so when God confused the language of humanity in Genesis 11, each family was forced to separate from every other family and find a place on Earth where they could settle in peace and safety. This meant that what was originally a fairly small family would grow into a people and eventually a nation, and therefore that people and nation would tend to look like the original family members. Over time, what had originally made the family a bit different now made an entire people tend to look the same.

For instance, if the Mahler family (beginning with my parents) had been one of the families isolated from all others and then been rediscovered as the nation of Mahleria a thousand years later, I can pretty much describe what Mahlerians would look like: short, bow-legged and fair-skinned (and amazingly good-looking and super intelligent, of course!). The things that set the Mahlers apart and that most likely would have been absorbed into the general population would have become (in isolation) the dominant aspects of a people.

There is also the idea of the amazing degree of adaptability and variation that God put into our genetic system, and since skin color is the issue by which we tend to most likely associate ourselves, I will use it as the example. Some of the descendants of Japheth spread to the far northern reaches of Western Europe, and are known rather generically as Scandinavians – a very fair-skinned people. Some of the descendants of Ham, however, spread into equatorial Africa and became a very dark-skinned people. These are remarkable differences in people who have common ancestors (Mr. & Mrs. Noah), but the explanation is not hard to understand.

In extreme Northern Europe there was far less (and weaker) sunlight than in Central Africa, especially in the Ice Age that followed the Flood. This meant that those who had the fairer skin that could absorb more of the sun and produce more Vitamin D would live longer and produce more children, eventually ensuring that the population would be light-skinned. The reverse would have been true in Central Africa, where those with fair skin would not have survived well in the sun or survived the skin cancer it easily causes among the light-skinned, ensuring that the population there grew increasing dark-skinned over time. I have even seen this throughout Asia, where those in Northern Asia are much lighter-skinned than those in Southern Asia, where they are much closer to the equator and must deal with harsher sunlight.

The great thing is, though, that not only are we all sons and daughters of Noah, but also of Adam and Eve, and so we all are equally human and bear the wonderful image of God (Genesis 1:26,27).

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Lesson Three: Families Are Really Important To God

When God confused the language of humanity in Genesis 11, He could have done it at any level that He chose to do so. He could have given all the guys one language and all the gals another. He could have given the descendants of Japheth one language, those of Shem another language, and those of Ham yet another language. Or He could have given everyone a different language, which would have been really interesting. Instead, He seems to have confused the issue of language at the family level.

Although God could have separated families when He did this, He chose not to separate the families. In fact, when we look at verses 5, 20 & 31, we see that people spread out according to their families, which then tended to eventually become nations with their own languages. This tells us that although He had a difficult thing to do to humanity through the confusion of languages, God did not split a husband from his wife or a child from a parent. God left the homes intact, and it was families that set out together to find their place upon Earth.

As our Heavenly Father (see John 1:12 & Matthew 6:9), nothing is more important to God than the family, and He is both its Author and Protector. He will never do anything to hurt, hinder or destroy the idea of family, and all who love Him will grow to love and support it, for it is how the image of God is spread upon Earth.

- Here are some questions that may help your study:
  - Who created the family?
  - Who knows best what a family should be?
  - What is a family?
  - What can Dad do to make the family better?
  - What can Mom do to make the family better?
  - What can the child do to make the family better?
  - What is the best thing a family can do together?
- Here are some Scriptures that may help your study:
  - Genesis 1:27
  - Exodus 20:12
  - Exodus 21:17
  - Psalm 127:3-5
  - Proverbs 31:10-31
  - Malachi 2:14-16
  - Luke 2:51,52
  - Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4
  - 1 Timothy 5:8

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Lesson Four: Where Did Everyone Go?

Note: This is largely a geographical exercise, so it may be a good idea (and fun) to have this study with a good world map on hand! Also, most of this information is gleaned from Dr. Henry Morris' *The Genesis Record*.

The list of names in our passage is often referred to as The Table of Nations, for it is indeed the most accurate listing of the origins of peoples that we have upon planet Earth. Isn't God great for giving us this list, so that we can know where our ancestors came from and how we're all related?! Now remember, before the confusion of tongues at Babel, everyone started out in essentially the same place (what is today very closely associated with Iraq), so try to figure where that is. We'll call it *Ground Zero*.

Since the Bible begins with Japheth (he was probably the oldest brother), we'll start with his descendants. Basically, the descendants of Japheth went north and west, eventually becoming Europeans, while one branch decided to head to the east, where they became the Medes and also the Indians (of India). Here's how the names work out: Japheth is known as Iapetos (the forefather of the Greeks) and Iyapeti (the forefather of the Indians). His son Gomer settled in Crimea, while Magog, Meshech and Tubal became the fathers of the Russian peoples. Madai went east and sired the Medes, with one of his descendants pushing farther east into India. Javan began the peoples around the Aegean Sea (including the Greeks), with some of his descendants spreading to Cyprus and perhaps as far as Spain.

Gomer (whose last name wasn't Pile) had three sons of note: Ashkenaz is known as the father of the Germanic (Gomeric) peoples (Jews from Germany are still known as Ashkenazi Jews to this day), while Riphath is the father of the Paphlagonians (northern Turkey) and Togarmah the father of the Armenians. So if you're part European, you're part Japheth.

Next we move on to Ham, whose descendants have covered most of the world! Cush is alternately translated as Ethiopia, Mizraim is the original name of Egypt, Put (or Phut) is the same as Libya, and Canaan we already know (from the land of Canaan). Cush's sons all headed south into the Arabian Peninsula, with some descendants eventually crossing the Red Sea into Ethiopia. Little is known about the first four tribes descended from Mizraim, but it is believed that they pushed deeper into Africa. The Pathrusites are associated with Pathros (Upper Egypt), and it seems that the Casluhites and Caphtorites originally settled in the area of Crete, but were perhaps driven out by the later descendants of Japheth. From there one group resettled on the southern plains of Canaan and were known as the Philistines.

The sons of Canaan settled quite a bit of territory in Asia Minor, where the Hittites created a large empire, as did eventually the sons of Sidon (who are known as Phoenicians in the history books). The rest of his descendants populated what would one day be called the Promised Land, including the Jebusites, who were the first inhabitants of Jerusalem. While Sin seems to have gone a bit farther south and settled in the Sinai desert, it would seem that some of his descendants got tired of that place and left for a place much farther east and eventually became the Asian peoples (Sino=China: see Isaiah 48:12). With the low sea levels due to the post-Flood Ice Age, it is most likely that the descendants of Ham walked across the Bering Strait and populated the Americas, and probably the Pacific Islands as well. Ham must have passed on the explorer genes big time!

Shem's descendants didn't seem to want to go very far, and basically populated Mesopotamia, Central Asia and Arabia. Elam is the ancient name for Persia, Asshur fathered the Assyrians, and Aram the Arameans/Syrians. The rest settled here and there within the region, with many eventually deciding upon the Arabian Peninsula. Of special note is Shem's great-grandson Eber, from whom we probably get the term Hebrew, which was the classification of Abraham and his descendants, who eventually turned Canaan into Israel.

- Here are some helpful suggestions for this study:
  - Pick an ethnic group (Italians, Arabs, Cambodians, etc.) at random and try to figure out how they're related to Noah (NOTE: A mixed ethnic heritage is fun to figure out)
  - Using a map, try to decide whose descendants went the farthest
  - Have everyone decide upon which part of the world they would have wanted to settle in and call their own