

PART 5: The Beginning of Nations

The fifth part of our Genesis Bible study will cover 10:1—11:26 and deal with the beginning of Nations. Chapter 10 will provide a genealogy of the descendants of Noah's sons leading up to the story of the "Tower of Babel," which begins chapter 11. Tracing the names of these descendants and their movements we will see how their descendants form the great nations of the world, divided generally over three geographic spheres. Through the event at Babel we will see how God divided and dispersed these peoples into various places where some still remain today. But even though the many names and national identities may seem at times very confusing, God has preserved a record in chapter 11:10-26 of those particular descendants of Noah's son, Shem, that carry the seed and the promise of God's ultimate plan for deliverance and salvation of all peoples.

Chapter 10: The Descendants of Noah:

The descendants of Noah's sons are listed beginning with Japheth, followed by Ham, and ending with Shem. This particular genealogy only includes the descendants leading up to the division and dispersion at Babel. A study of the names of these descendants as they appear later throughout the Bible is very revealing. We will examine what happens to the "nations" or "peoples" that will later be identified by the descendants listed here.

Verse-1: *"Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood."* The Hebrew word translated as "generations" can mean "family, lineage, family register or genealogy," therefore essentially referring to the descendants of Noah's sons. But given that the entire world will be populated by these descendants, we all belong to this family. We have previously discussed the possibility of children being born to Shem, Ham and Japheth before the flood, but here the original Hebrew puts this to rest. While the English translation may leave room for a different interpretation, the actual Hebrew translated word for word would be "were-born-to-them sons after the-flood."

The Descendants of Japheth:

Verse-2: *"The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meschech and Tiras."* Six sons are listed for Japheth. There is evidence

that these sons and their descendants settled both in the Ararat mountain region, but also spread east, west, and predominately northward to fill what today is Europe and Russia.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Bible is not intended as a world history but a faith history of God's people. For this reason, "peoples" or "nations" mentioned in the Bible are generally spoken of in regard to their relationship with God's chosen people or God's plan for His people. And, God consistently identifies "peoples" or "nations" with the names from which they are descended. While some names may appear in many locations in a variety of contexts, it serves us here to look for places where the names are used together in clusters. There are two locations where the names of both the sons of Japheth and the names of his son's sons are used collectively as a group. The first is found in Isaiah 66:19, which reads: ***"And I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meschech, Rosh, Tubal, and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations."*** You will note that of the seven names listed, three of them are Japheth's sons, Meschech, Tural and Javan, and another is Javan's son, Tarshish. According to Isaiah, when God ultimately destroys the nations gathered at and against Israel, He will send survivors to these nations to witness His glory.

The second and more powerful name cluster occurs in Ezekiel, chapter 38. God is telling Ezekiel to prophecy against the nations coming against His people Israel at a final great battle we call Armageddon. God declares to Ezekiel, saying, ***"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal... Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples with you."'"***

(Ezekiel 38:2-3, 6). "Gog" is a Hebrew word for ruler, and "Gog" and "Magog" are listed together in Revelation 20:8 as leading those who gather for war against God's people. "Rosh" is the ancient name for "Russia," and "Meshech" is the name that the city of "Moscow" is derived from. Four of Japheth's sons (Magog, Mechech, Tubal and Gomer) are mentioned, along with Gomer's son, Togarmah. "Togarmah" is mentioned as "Beth-togarmah," which literally means "the house of Togarmah."

So what can we derive from all this? Noah's prophetic utterance in Genesis 9:27 asked that God "enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem." Undoubtedly, God will "enlarge Japheth" with his sons and their descendants spreading out over a vast area which will include much of Europe, Russia and surrounding regions. But we must remember that only a portion of Shem's descendants will stay true to God. We may also note that not all of Japheth's descendants are listed among those who will one day come against God's people. Evidently, some will reside in Shem's tents and some will not.

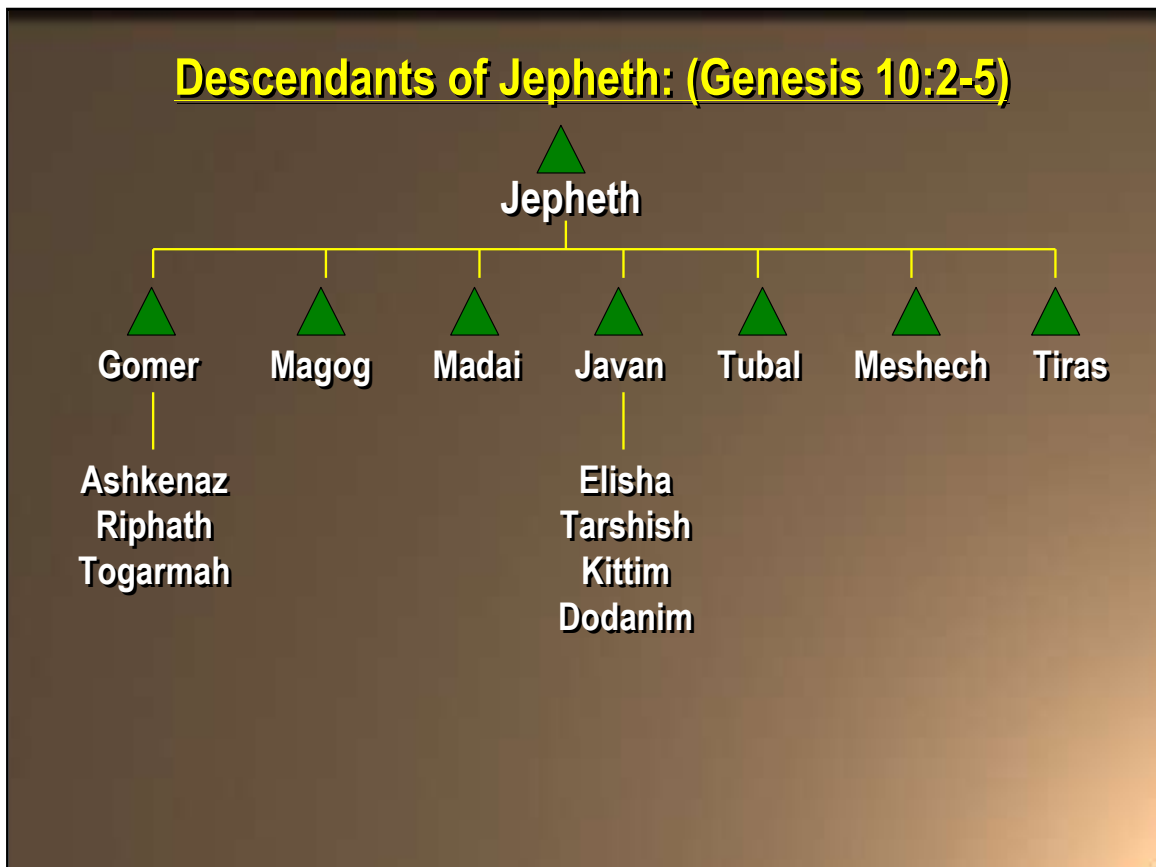
Verse-3: *"And the sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah."* Three sons are listed for Gomer. We have already seen "Togarmah" is listed with those who will one day rise against Israel. "Riphath," sometimes is listed as "Diphath," is not mentioned further in the Bible. "Ashkenaz" is mentioned once in Jeremiah 51:27 among the nations God calls to rise up to punish Babylon for its sin.

Verse-4: *"And the sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim."* Four sons are listed for Javan. The Bible provides no additional information for "Dodanim" who is also sometimes listed as "Rodanim." Regarding "Kittim," which is identified as "Cyprus" and other islands, Daniel 11:30 states that "ships of Kittim will come against" the one who sets up the abomination of desolation. This would indicate that this nation will align itself with God's chosen. On the other hand, both "Elishah" and "Tarshish" are listed among the nations in Ezekiel 27 who trade with Tyre. Tyre is lamented over because it lifted itself up to greatness at the expense of others. In Ezekiel 28, the king of Tyre is given a description which can be identified with Satan. "Tarshish" is mentioned many times in the Bible. It is the place where Jonah attempted to flee from God's command, and the place the Apostle Paul was from.

Verse-5: *"From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations."* The Hebrew word translated as "coastlands" literally refers to "shorelines" and "islands," primarily confined to the Mediterranean Sea. The Hebrew word translated as "nations" literally means "inhabitants, populace, peoples or tribes." Therefore, it infers a sense of "families" with a common genealogy rather than the way we think of nations today. The Hebrew word translated as "lands" refers to "territories" or regions of land with geographical boundaries. The Hebrew word translated as "separated" literally

means “to divide” but also infers “keeping to oneself” or “branching off.” Essentially, this verse is saying that it was the descendants of Japheth that “branched off” into “family groups” to inhabit the islands and coastlines of the Middle East. Coastal people generally become both fishermen and sea traders.

The map found on page 82 indicates the regions believed to be where the descendants of Japheth settled. The chart below provides a diagram of the descendants of Japheth.



The Descendants of Ham:

Verse-6: *“The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.”*

Normally, sons are listed in birth order but Canaan is listed last, even though he is mentioned in Noah’s curse, evidently before he was born. Each of Ham’s sons is directly identified with a nation that has generally been hostile towards God’s people and that remains to this day. “Cush” is identified with “Ethiopia” and is one of the nations that are listed in Isaiah 43:3 that will be given as “ransom” for Israel. “Mizraim” is identified as “Egypt” which certainly needs no clarification as being a frequent enemy to Israel. It

is Egypt that will later welcome Joseph and then enslave God's people, resulting in God delivering them through the miraculous event of ten plagues. Egypt is also listed as given in "ransom" for Israel in Isaiah 43:3. "Put" is identified as "Libya," a frequent enemy of God's people, and listed along with "Cush" (Ethiopia) in Ezekiel 38: 5 as joining with some of the descendants of Japheth in rising against God's people at Armageddon. And finally, "Canaan," which was cursed by Noah in Genesis 9:25, will become the people God will displace, giving their land to His chosen people. This is also the land of the Philistines, who come from the descendants of "Canaan." These people will be in constant conflict with God's people, and their descendants in the area of the Gaza Strip continue to be in conflict with Israel to this day.

Verse-7: *"And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan."* In this verse five sons are listed for Cush, and two sons are named for his son Raamah. In verse 8 we will be given the name of a sixth son of Cush named Nimrod. While the Bible provides virtually no information about three of Cush's sons, "Havilah, Sabtah and Sabteca," it is believed they settled in the region on either side of the Red Sea where it meets the Gulf of Aden. "Seba" is also listed with Cush (Ethiopia) and Mizraim (Egypt) as those nations or peoples to be "ransomed" for Israel. As for "Sheba" and "Dedan" they are both listed in Ezekiel 38:13 as among the nations rising up against God's people.

Verses 8 & 9: *"Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.'"* While most of the descendants are only named, five verses are dedicated to Cush's son Nimrod. Yet Nimrod is barely mentioned in the balance of the Bible. But in Micah 5:6 we learn that Nimrod is identified with Assyria and the power of the sword: *"And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory."* The Hebrew meaning of the name "Nimrod" literally means "let us rebel" or "rebellion." The writings of the great Jewish scholar, Josephus, state: *"Nimrod persuaded mankind not to ascribe their happiness to God, but to think his own excellency was its source. And he soon changed things into a tyranny, thinking there was no other way to wean men from the*

fear of God, than by making them rely on his own power.” The Scripture states that Nimrod was “a mighty hunter before the Lord.” The problem is that this passage can be interpreted two ways. The Hebrew word translated as “before” can mean “in front of” or “above.” Does Nimrod see himself as “in front of” or “above” God? The meaning of his name and the character of the cities he will found would suggest he “rebels” against God.

Verses 10 & 12: *“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.”* We are given a list of eight cities that Nimrod is credited for founding. The most famous of these would be Babel, also known as Babylon, and Nineveh. These were great cities of great size, built and sustained with mighty power, often the power of the sword. This is in the character of Nimrod, and both Babylon and Nineveh will be known as antagonists of God’s truth and God’s people.

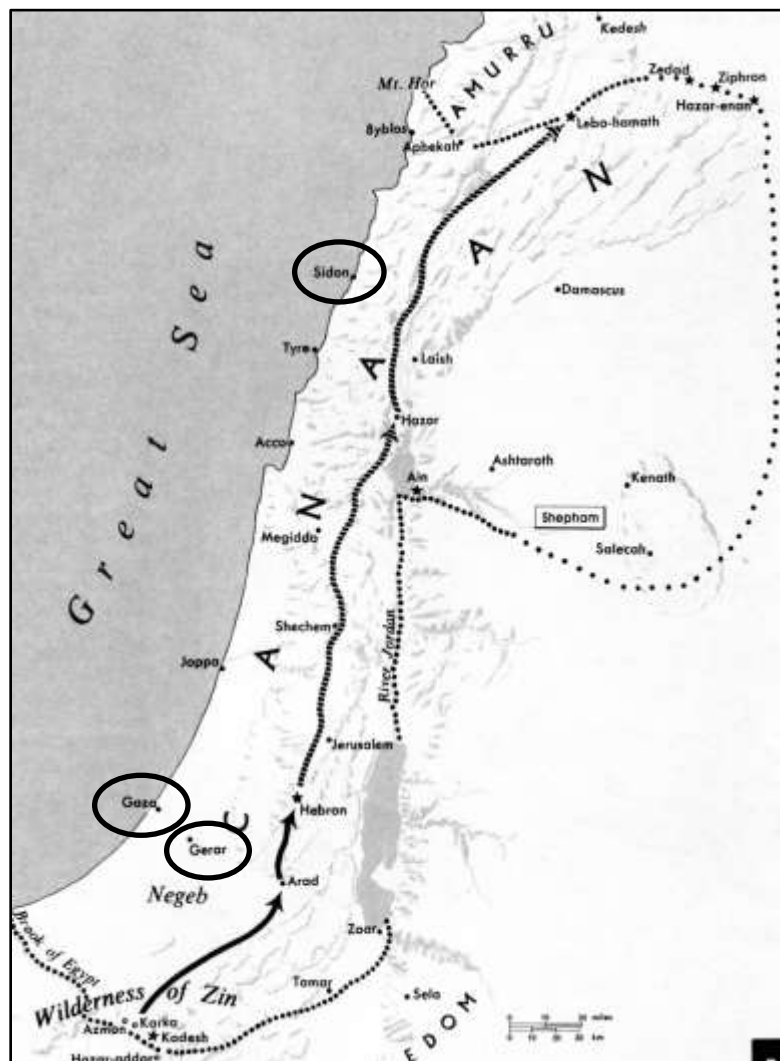
Verses 13 & 14: *“And Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.”* We already know that Mizraim is identified with Egypt. Now we are provided the names of seven sons, which are not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible but are here identified as becoming the Philistines. The Philistines will also live by the power of the sword and will be the sworn enemies of the Israelites. The region of the Philistines is today the area of the Gaza Strip and these same people continue to be the enemy of Israel.

Verses 15 through 18: *“And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.”* All the descendants of Canaan settled in the land of Canaan, which is the “promised land” that God said He would give to His chosen people. God commanded that these peoples were to be destroyed, saying, *“But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the*

Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 21:17-18). God will later chastise His people for not completely separating themselves from the people of Canaan that He considered an abomination, saying, *“The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites”* (Ezra 9:1). Obviously the descendants of Canaan were considered an abomination because of their idol worship, so God gave His people their land, ordered their destruction so His people would not be corrupted by their evil ways, and ultimately chastised His own people for failing to keep themselves separated from their corruptive influence.

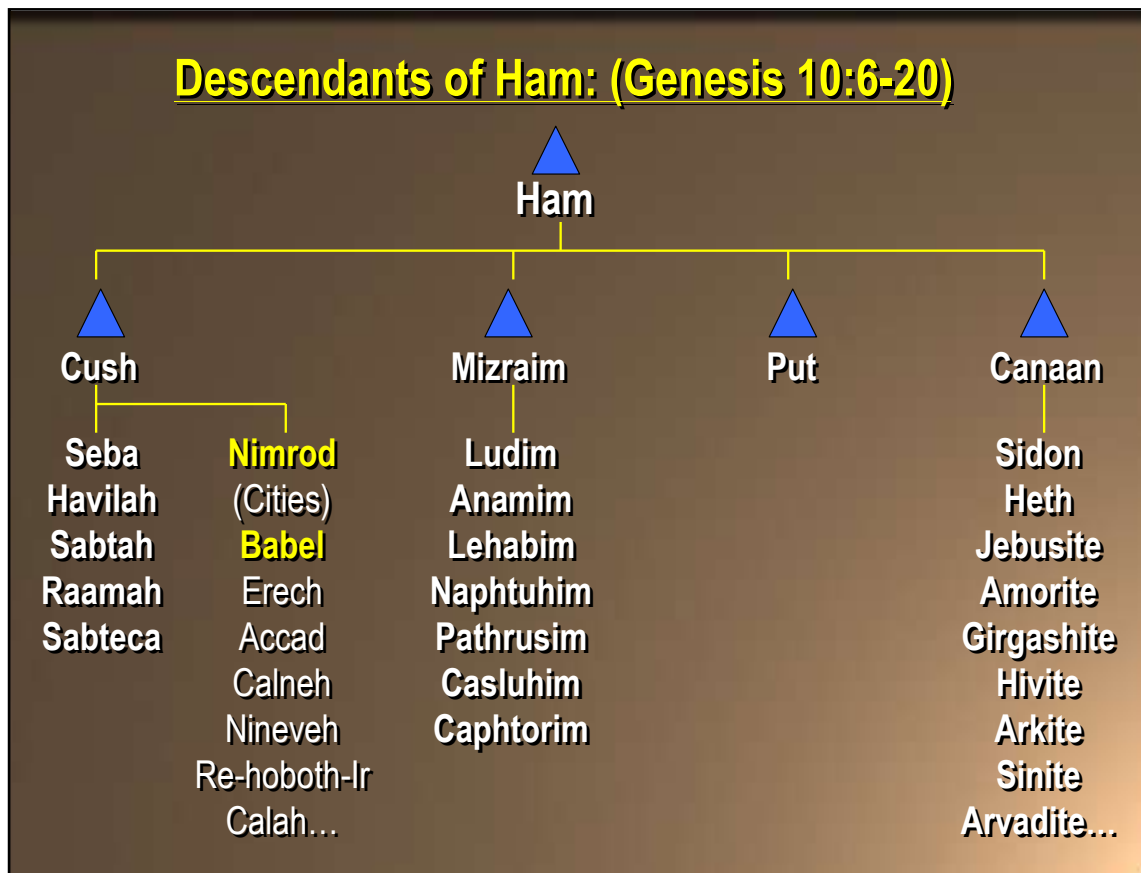
Verse-19: *“And the territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as*

Lasha.” Unfortunately, the exact locations of many of the places listed are either unknown or widely debated today. The north and south boundaries are clear and remain the same today. They include Sidon at the north and Gaza at the south. The map at right depicts what many think were the boundaries of the land of Canaan at the time Moses sent spies to search out the land and three locations listed.



Verse-20: *“These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.”* This verse closes the genealogy provided for the descendants of Noah’s son Ham. Note that the different descendants are said to have their separate families, languages, lands and nations. Regarding languages, the Hebrew word actually means “tongue” which can refer to different languages of different dialects of the same language. The Hebrew word translated as “nations” literally refers to “peoples” and not a nation as we understand the word today.

The map found on page 82 indicates the regions believed to be where the descendants of Ham settled. The chart below provides a diagram of the descendants of Ham.



The Descendants of Shem:

Verse-21: *“And also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born.”* It should be noted that emphasis is being immediately placed on the sons of Eber, with little regard for the many other descendants which will be listed. Eber is not the son of Shem but of Shelah, two generations later.

The children or sons of Eber would be Peleg and Joktan. Emphasis seems to be more highly placed on Peleg in that the meaning of his name is revealed as “divided” because “for in his days the earth was divided” (10:25).

Verse-22: *“The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.”* Five sons are listed for Shem. Regarding “Elam,” Isaiah 49:34-39 states that they will be scattered and consumed, but in the last days restored. Regarding “Lud,” Ezekiel 30:5 lists Lud among the nations that will fall by the sword, but Isaiah 66:19 lists Lud among the nations that will send survivors back to their homeland to declare God’s glory after Armageddon. Regarding “Aram,” Isaiah 17:3 states that a remnant “will be like the glory of the sons of Israel” after Damascus is destroyed. While clearly the descendants of three of the five sons of Shem will suffer punishment for their errors with a remnant restored in the end, little is revealed about “Asshur” and “Arpachshad” except that “Arpachshad” will be the one who carries the seed and promise forward (11:12).

Verse-23: *“And the sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.”* Four sons are listed for Shem’s son Aram. There are no additional references in scripture informing us to what will become of “Hul, Gether and Mash.” Regarding “Uz,” in Jeremiah 25:20 it is listed among those nations God will one day judge and punish.

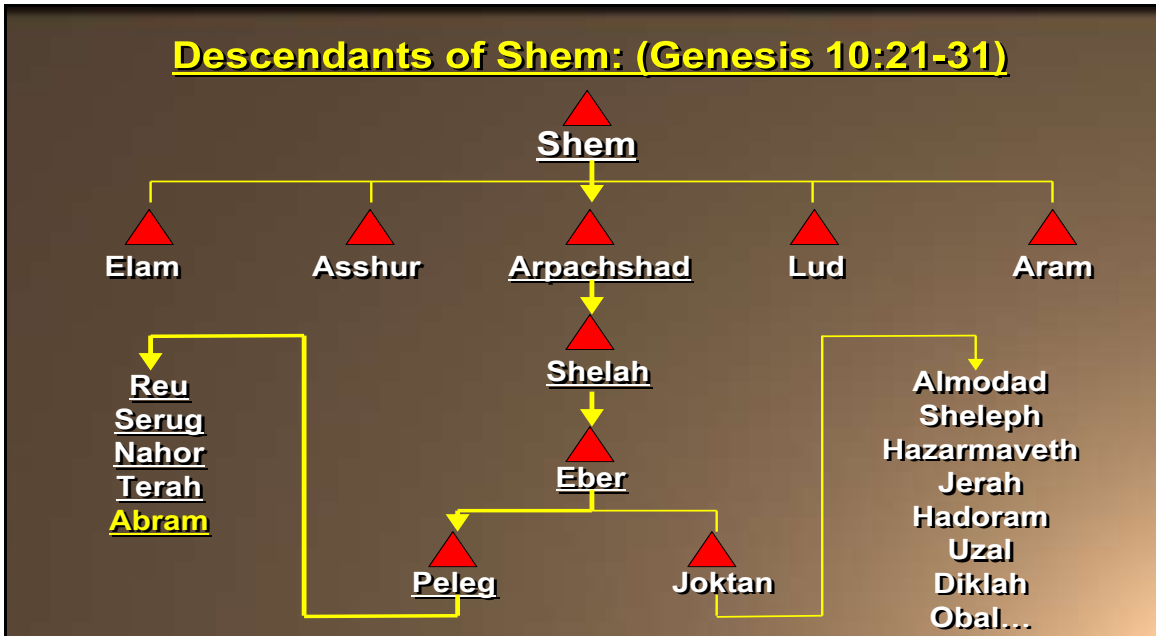
Verse-24: *“And Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.”* Only one son, “Shelah,” is named of those born to Shem’s son “Arpachshad,” and only one son, “Eber” is named of those born to “Shelah.” Scripture contains no further references to “Shelah,” but Numbers 24:24 states that one of Japheth’s descendants, “Kittim,” will send ships to afflict “Eber.” What is most important is that “Shelah” and “Eber” continue to pass the seed and promise of God forward, generation to generation.

Verse-25: *“And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan.”* As previously stated, “Peleg” is given emphasis because it is during his time that the peoples of the earth will be divided and scattered by God, which will result from the “rebellion” at Babel. “Peleg” will pass on the seed and promise, but there is no other mention of him or “Joktan” in the balance of the Bible.

Verses 26 through 29: *“And Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah and Obal and Abimael and Sheba and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.”* Thirteen sons are named as coming from Joktan. The Bible only provides additional references other than genealogical on any of the sons except two, “Uzal” and “Sheba.” Regarding “Uzal,” Ezekiel 27:19 includes Uzal as a source of merchandise purchased for condemned Tyre. This reference is insignificant and does not speak to either the character or ultimate destiny of Uzal. Likewise, “Sheba” is listed in Ezekiel 27: 22-23 as traders with Tyre, but more frequently as a source of gold (Psalm 72:15 & Isaiah 60:6).

Verse-30: *“Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.”* We can presume that “their settlement” refers to the land settled by Joktan’s sons. The map found on page 82 shows this to be the south shores of the Persian Gulf in what today is Saudi Arabia.

Verse-31: *“These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.”* Again, we are given a closing statement affirming that the provided list provides the family names, and corresponding languages, lands and nations where Shem’s descendants settled. The chart below shows the relationship of all descendants.



Verse-32: *“These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”* Just as each of Noah’s three sons has been given a closing verse,

affirming the list to be complete, now we are given a general closing verse pertaining to Noah’s three sons. It is important that we focus on there being “three” sons, which are separated to cover at least initially three regions of the earth. Noah’s son Japheth and his descendants, beginning in what would today be Turkey spread north, east and west to cover Europe and what is today Russia. Noah’s son Ham and his descendants settle in Palestine and spread south and west to cover what is today Africa. And Noah’s son Shem and his descendants settle in the eastern portions of the Middle East including Assyria. It is impossible to know the appearance of the three sons of Noah, but ancient artwork provides some indication that their descendants looked remarkably different. The drawings at right depict images that have been attributed to these three peoples.

The map on the following page shows the regions each of Noah’s sons and their descendants settled. Many family names are indicated on the map, depicting at least their initial locations.



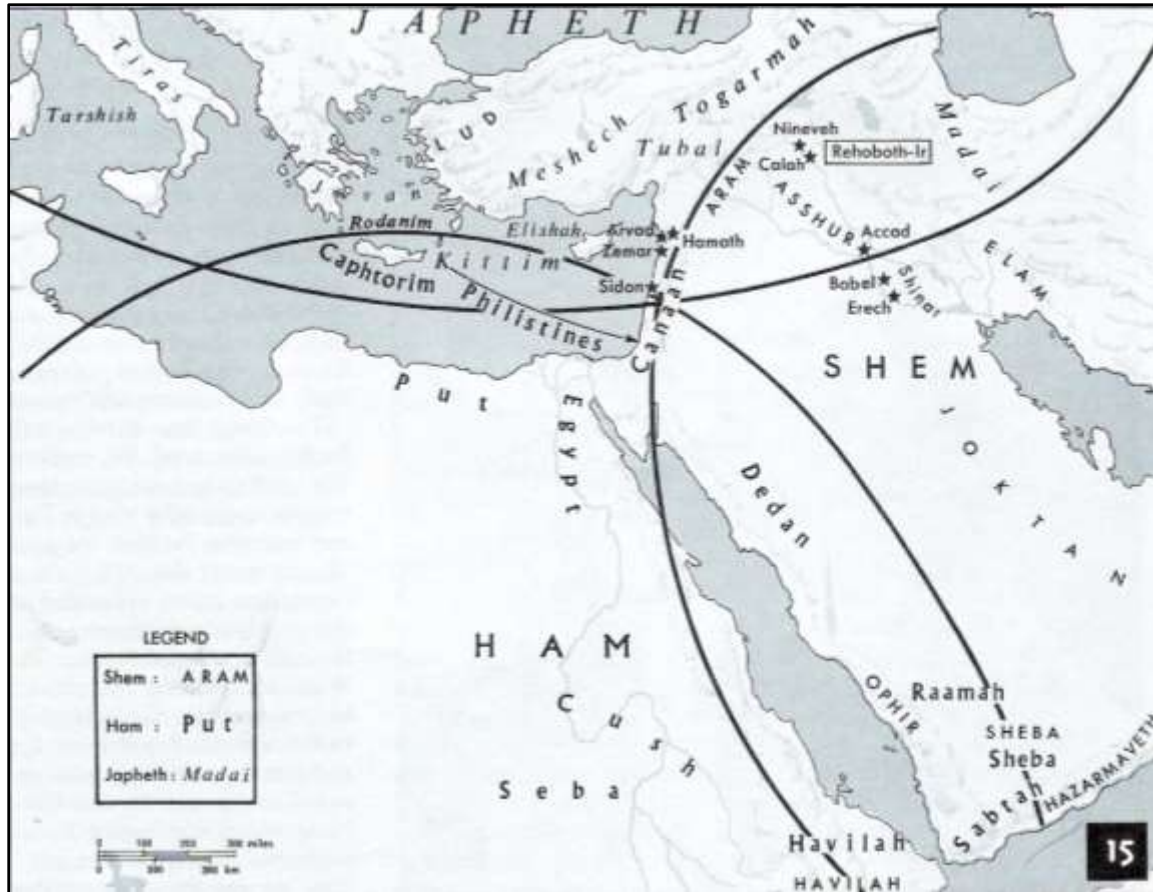
Japheth — (Cretan wall painting of Cnossus)



Ham — Ti, Queen of Egypt (Beginning of fourteenth century B.C.)



Shem — Assyrian (Relief from palace of Sargon at Khorsabad)



The descendants of Noah's three sons will constitute all the nations or peoples of the ancient world. All other nations will be derived from these but many of these peoples will continue to hold their identities even to this day. Likewise, the character of these peoples also seems to have been sustained through the many millennia. The descendants that originally rebelled against God continue to do so. Those who lived by their own power rather than dependence on God continue to do so. Those who were chosen and generally faithful to God continue to do so. But we also see that all descendants do not strictly follow in their father's footsteps, some changing for the worst and some for the better. In the end, those chosen by God, even though not always faithful to God have or can be expected to return to Him, and be restored to the place God intended. Others, who have always rebelled, can be expected to continue to do so until God passes judgment on them as He will one day do. We can learn much and gain much insight into the current nations based on their origins. From the very beginning, as we can see in Genesis the book of beginnings, that God has a plan and has known how it will end from the beginning.

Chapter 11: The Tower of Babel:

The Tower of Babel informs us how and why the people of the earth became dispersed into many races, nations and languages. While the story seems to contradict the genealogical record of Genesis 10, it actually provides explanation of the “why and how” we separated to become so many different nations or peoples. The story must be viewed in the context of our failure to respect God’s instructions, as occurred in Genesis 3 (the “Fall” in the Garden of Eden), and in the lack of respect shown Noah in Genesis 9. The genealogy found in Genesis shows that the dispersion at the Tower of Babel didn’t occur until a number of generations had been born from Noah’s sons. The key issue addressed by this even is one of human pride. God dispersed the people and confused their language because of their arrogance and pride in attempting to make a name for themselves instead of worshiping God. Their attempt to build a tower to reach heaven rather than having faith and relying upon God clearly indicates they are being self-centered rather than God-centered.

Verse-1: “Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.”

The Hebrew word translated as “earth” is not a reference to ground or land but the “whole earth” as in the “planet earth.” The Hebrew word translated as “language” literally means “lip” and infers “speech” or “dialect.” The Hebrew word translated as “words” literally means specific “words” relative to specific “matters” or “things.” Essentially, this verse is saying that everyone living on the earth was using the same words to communicate things and matters. Their accents may have been very different dependent from the regions they lived or family groups, but they used the same “language” and the same “words” for communicating.

Verse-2: “And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.” The reference to journeying east is perplexing because according to Genesis 8:4 Noah’s ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, which is north rather than west of the Plain of Shinar. But based on the geographical references provided in Genesis 10, the descendants of Ham settled to the southwest in present day North Africa and Egypt and then Nimrod migrated “east” to the Plain of Shinar where he built cities, the first of which was Babel. The appearance is that the

entire world spoke the same language until “mighty” Nimrod and his following migrated east and attempted to build the Tower of Babel.

Verse-3: *“And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.”*

According to the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible: “There is neither building stone nor lime on the alluvial Plain of Shinar, and so clay bricks were used for stone. Instead of mortar, slime (bitumen) was employed, of which abundant supplies were found in ancient times at Hit, about 140 miles up the Euphrates from Babylon.” Given these facts, this verse provides confirmation regarding the location of the Plain of Shinar.

Verse-4: *“And they said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”* The Hebrew word translated as “top” literally means “the head” or “chief leader.” The particular Hebrew word translated as “heaven” means “aloft” or “high” and is often used in reference to the heaven where God lives, inferring that it is “aloft” or “high” above our world. It is important to remember what we learned about Ham’s descendant Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-12. The name Nimrod means “rebellion” which provides insight into the saying, “He was mighty before the Lord.” We are also told that the “beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (10:10). This could also infer the beginning of his rebellion was at Babel. We also have learned that Nimrod may have been focused on self-glorification, believing that we don’t need God and should be self-reliant. While a great physical tower might have been built of brick and tar, what was truly under construction was a rebellion against God. It is said that a “self-made man worships his creator” and indeed it is arrogant for men to think they can reach heaven without God through the construction of a tower. According to the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible the word “Babel” means “gate of God.” The same Hebrew word is also translated as “Babylon.” From the earliest times Babylon was conceived of as the emblem of human pride and ambition and was destined to fall. The “Tower of Babel” portrays the vanity of human self-glorification and the failure of man without dependence upon God. By popular etymology, the Hebrew author derives “Babel” from the root “*balal*” which means “confuse” or “confound.” Psalm 127:1

states: ***“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.”***

Verse-5: ***“And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.”*** The Hebrew word translated as “to see” means “to see intellectually” or to “perceive” or “inspect” or “regard.” We are being told that God came down to inspect their motives, what they were intending in the building of the tower and why.

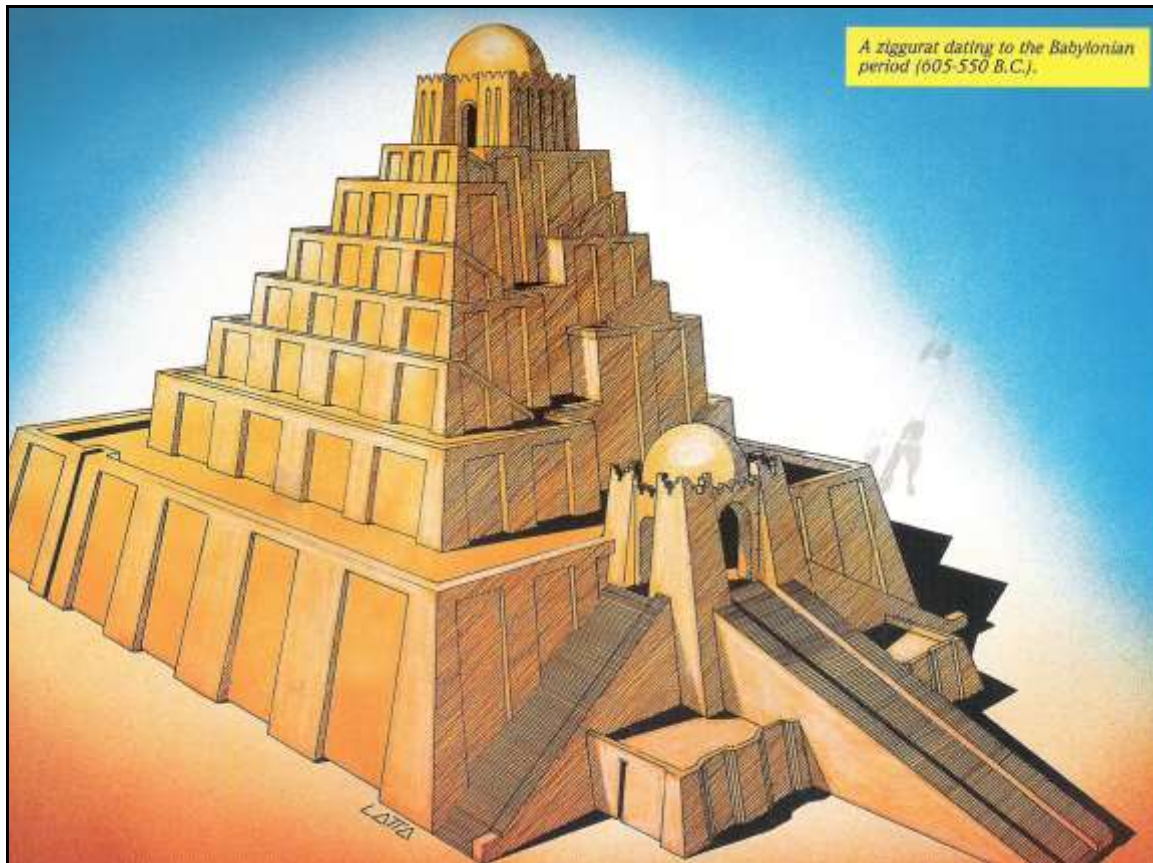
Verse-6: ***“And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.’*** The Hebrew word translated as “impossible” literally means “withheld from” in that the people are so determined that nothing will be withheld from them given such an effort. They are “one people” of “one language” meaning that they are of the same mind with the same intent, working together to accomplish a common goal. Normally, and according to the standards of this world, this would be commendable and celebrated. But God understands that the more we focus inward on ourselves and our own interests, the more corrupt and destructive we become. God saw what “we began to do” and knows that nothing we “purpose to do will be impossible,” but God knows this path will not truly lead to heaven but disaster and hell. Therefore God will intercede on our behalf even though we don’t think we want Him to.

Verse-7: ***“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”*** The Hebrew word translated as “confuse” comes from a root meaning “to pour over” or “to be anointed,” coming from when the oil is poured over the flower in a sacrifice and becomes “mixed.” Therefore it carries the meaning of “to mix” or “to stain” or “to be moistened.” The Hebrew word translated as “understand” means “to hear intelligently” or “to give undivided listening attention.” Given the meaning of these words, it is not as much that God is changing all their languages but obscuring how they listen to one another. In a way, this is the natural result of self-centeredness. First, people will work cooperatively together to satisfy their own selfish desires, but at some point their focus on self, causes them to stop listening to others and stop being cooperative with others in the group. An example might be a group of robbers that work together to rob a bank and then fight with each other over the division of the bounty.

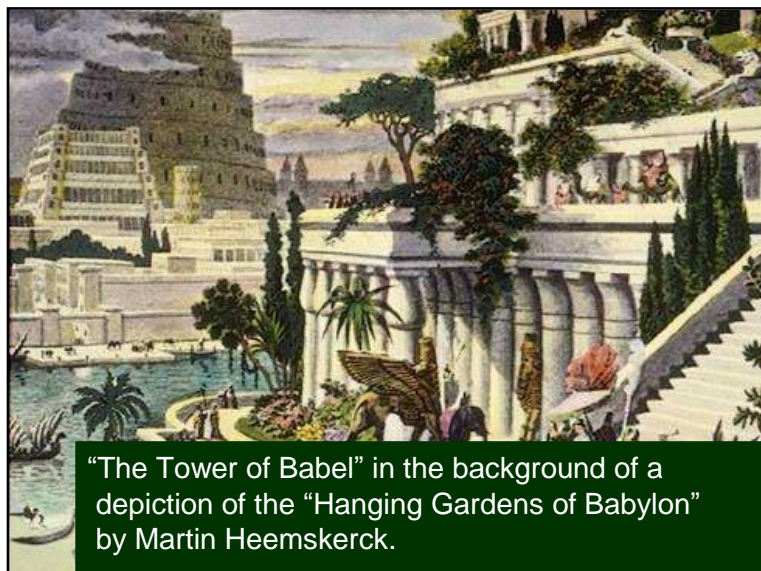
Verse-8: *“So the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.”* The Hebrew word translated as “scattered” means “to scatter” or “to disperse” or “to be pushed out.” The scattering is the result of their no longer being able to communicate and work together effectively. Essentially, God has caused there to be differences between them which has resulted in their separating themselves into different groups. Those who are different are being “pushed out” or one could say their differences have caused a forced migration, spreading people out over the earth into new unpopulated lands. This process will continue until people have spread all over the face of the earth.

Verse-9: *“Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.”* We have already discussed that the name “Babel” means “the gate of God,” and is derived from the Hebrew root word “*balal*” which means to “confuse” and “confound.” We’ve also discussed that when the Lord “confused the language” this was more about no longer hearing each other than what they were speaking. What truly separated the peoples were their differences in understanding and opinion. At Babel people began to work together to advance themselves and gain access to heaven by their “own efforts” rather than relying upon God. Selfishness and self-centeredness always create boundaries and divisions between people. When we care only about ourselves, then we don’t care about those around us and compete with them for resources. When we are God-centered, we follow God’s directive to be outwardly focused and care for others. Being God-centered builds unity and being self-centered results in separation.

God will not tolerate the arrogance of man but seeks to be in a relationship with us in which we are dependent upon His grace and respond with appreciation and praise, not arrogance and defiance. We will never gain access to heaven by our own efforts or work no matter how good we may think it is. Only God is truly good and only through a relationship with God in which we surrender to His will and allow Him to be our “Lord” will we enter the “gate of heaven.”

Babylonian Ziggurat:

According to the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, the author of Genesis 11, undoubtedly had in mind a Babylonian temple tower, or ziggurat. This type of structure is found in primitive Sumerian times. There was in Babylon an ancient ziggurat, which is known to have existed already in the second millennium B.C. It was called Etemenanaki (house of the foundation stone of heaven and earth). Babylon was revered as a great city. Herodotus states that Babylon was a square, each side being 120 stades, or about 15 miles, in length. This measurement yields an area of nearly 200 square miles.



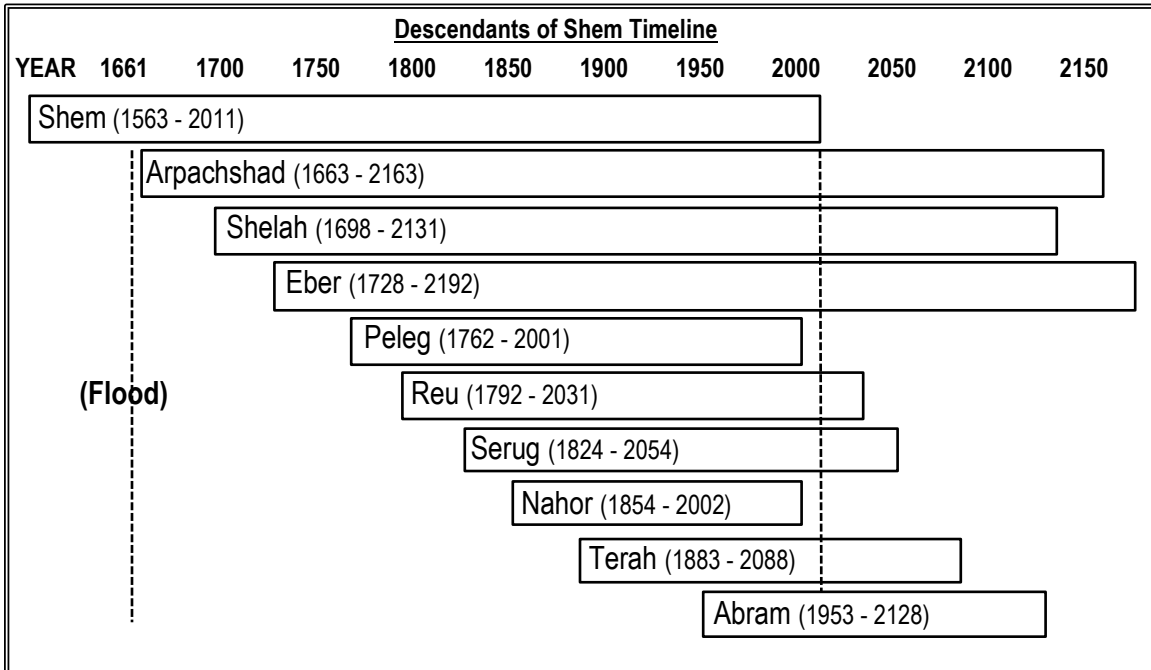
"The Tower of Babel" in the background of a depiction of the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" by Martin Heemskerck.

While Babylon might have been a great city built by men, it has long since been destroyed and only ruins remain today. Revelation 17:5, states: ***“Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.”*** Obviously, Babylon is symbolic for all that stands in defiance of God’s will. It may be significant or only coincidence, but according to Revelation 21:16, God’s holy city, the new Jerusalem, is exactly 100 times larger than the former Babylon. Babylon was 120 stadia square (15 miles square) but the New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia square (1,500 miles square). Revelation 21:2, 16 states: ***“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband... The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.”***

The Descendants of Shem

Genesis 11:10-26 provides a list of the descendants of Noah’s firstborn son, Shem. This genealogy differs from that previously provided in Genesis 10:21-31 because it includes only those direct descendants in which the “seed” or promise of God is passed down. All other descendants of Shem are omitted. Also, in this account we are provided time references, including how many years after birth of each “seed” descendant until the next “seed” descendant is born, and how many years each descendant lives. You will also note that just as we told regarding the “seed” descendants of Adam, each descendant had “other sons and daughter” in addition to those who carry the “seed.”

Using the provided time references it is possible to chart the birth dates and death dates of each “seed” descendant of Shem. The chart begins with the year 1,661, which is the date previously calculated as the number of years from the creation of Adam to the beginning of the Great Flood. Genesis 11:10 states that ***“Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood,”*** providing a birth date for Shem of 1,563, and a birth date for Arpachshad of 1,663. The reference does not make it clear if it is being measured from the date the flood “began” or “ended.” Because the flood lasted one year from beginning to when they departed the ark, our dates could be off up to one year. The chart depicts birth dates based on measuring from the date the flood began. You will note that Shem is still alive when Abram is born, and that the three descendants immediately following Shem actually lived longer than Abram (Abraham).



(This Concludes Part-5)