



What do you think is the main intention of the book of Genesis? Think about it for a moment. I think people will give various answers. Maybe some argue that Genesis' main purpose is to fight against evolutionary theory. Others might say that Genesis is written to ensure that we know certain morality so we can be better people. But what do you think?

Let's make the question more specific. **What do you think the main intention for Moses writing Genesis for the Israelites wandering in the wilderness?** The nation has been in slavery to Egypt for 400 years, and now they are set free, but they're wandering. Yes, God is giving them manna. Yes, God has parted the Red Sea. They've seen miracles. They've seen the smoke on Sinai. So, why "Genesis?" I think the ultimate purpose for the book of Genesis is **to reintroduce Israel to God, and to reveal God's plan to rescue people from their sinfulness and welcome them into his arms.** Now, in saying this, that doesn't mean that I don't think Genesis doesn't speak to morality and creation and other very important items. But what's the point of Moses addressing all of these things? Is it just so that Israel can be smarter and have more information? No! It's so that they would see their need for the Lord and that they wouldn't lean on themselves, but trust in and know the Lord more deeply relationally. You see, when Genesis begin with "In the beginning, God," God is saying to the Israelites (and to all of us), "I'm going to show you who I am."

As I say this, I want to ask you something. If this is the ultimate purpose of Genesis, then how are you listening to and receiving the sermons each week? Are you thinking of how the truths shared each Sunday are spoken to increase your awe in God and to draw closer to him? Or, are you just excited for more information on items you're passionate about? If it's the second, then you're listening with idolatrous ears. You don't want God. You want things. Oh, how I pray that you've continually been reintroduced to God each week. I pray you've been in awe of him and compelled to commune with him by faith.

Now, you might wonder why I say all of this today. Well, it's because we're going to spend time in a chapter that simply does not seem to have much purpose to it at all. This entire chapter is a genealogy. Even one of the commentators I read this past week said that this chapter of Genesis is the most neglected chapter in all of Genesis. Personally, I think this could be a chapter that we think is just necessary to move from Shem, Ham, and Japheth to Babylon and then Abraham. It's just a pitstop. But, I want to emphasize that Genesis 10 serves the same intention as the entire book of Genesis. Genesis 10 continues our reintroduction to God!

With this, let me introduce you to God again today and share with you the main idea of the sermon: **The Lord, who is sovereign over all, weaves his redemptive plan within the apparent chaos of the world.**

I'll explain in a little bit how in the world I arrived to this main idea statement, but I want to ask you, do you feel like life is chaotic? When you listen to global news, doesn't your heart ache? When you see

what's going on in America, are you ever at a loss for words because of the brokenness around us? Maybe you feel the brokenness acutely in your own personal life or your family life? Or, maybe you feel it even within our church family. You *feel* the chaos.

What do you do when you feel the chaos? Some of us might try to self-soothe through media scrolling or eating food or just doing something fun to get our minds off of it. But the reality is that no matter what we do, when we stop and look around us, the chaos remains, doesn't it? Genesis affirms the chaos. Right after God introduces himself in Genesis 1:1 as being before the beginning, in verse 2, he reveals himself to be the God who is over the chaos that we see. This theme continues when we read about Adam and Eve's sin. God is over them. They couldn't thwart God. He was over the chaos of sin and promised a serpent-crusher to come and rid the world of sin. Then we recently studied about the flood, where the Spirit (or, wind) moved the waters of judgment and then enabled Noah and his family to walk on the earth again. God is over all apparent chaos.

We need this consistent reminder because we are a forgetful people, aren't we? We can think of how God worked in the past, but then we go through a new event and think, "But what about this time? Has God forgotten us?" Isn't this precisely how the Israelites acted in the wilderness, too? They could rehearse God's faithfulness in the past, but they battled against trusting him in the present time.

Now, imagine what things were like for Noah and his family. We saw last week that the world Noah entered was clearly imperfect. It's just as fallen as it was before. And Noah declares, on God's behalf, blessings and a curse to his three sons. I want to pick up here on something that is valuable to note in Genesis. How many of Adam and Eve's children were emphasized by name? Three. One has faith and dies. One has no faith and is cursed. Another rises up and is the one through whom God's promised serpent-crusher will come. A similar thing is happening with Noah's sons, too. One is cursed. One is blessed and the serpent-crusher will come through him. Another is blessed in the blessing of the other. In Noah's sons, we saw last week that Japheth represents Gentiles (non-Jews) and Shem represents the Jewish people, whereas Ham represents the seed of the serpent that is to be crushed. As we put Noah's and Adam's sons together, we see that God is calling both Jews and Gentiles to trust him. These sons are representative of humanity. Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, will you turn to God? Will you turn from your self-salvation, self-protective, self-centered efforts and savor and trust in our glorious God?

This is Moses' call to the Israelites. Will they trust the Lord as they wander? When they enter the Promised Land, will they trust the Lord and love him? The question comes to us, too. In the chaos of this broken, cursed world, will we trust and adore our Lord? For me personally, I can honestly say that this past year has been the most difficult year of my entire life. Most of you know that I've battled in my past with depression, mental struggles, and chronic physical pain. But this past year went deeper – and most, or many, of you know many of the things in my life. Some of you know all. This year has felt like chaos. A couple weeks ago, I was talking with my spiritual director, Thad Barnum, and in our conversation we were talking about the Lord and I proceeded to say that I cannot imagine what life would be like if I didn't know and experience the Lord. If I didn't believe and have the faith to be convinced that he is both good and in control of everything, I'd be done. I would have given up. But knowing the Lord changes everything. He gives grace upon grace, and empowers me to endure with hope. How can I have hope? Because I know my sovereign Lord.

This type of confident hope is what I pray we'd all have. And this is what I believe is God's, and Moses', desire in even chapter 10 of Genesis. The Israelites need to know God. In looking at Canaan's descendants, they need to see how being like Canaan (or being like Cain) is a fool's effort. To give into the chaos is ruin. But to trust the Lord breeds hope in the serpent-crusher to come! And Genesis 10

shows, even in a genealogy that God is worthy of our trust! So, we might be tempted to think that a genealogy is dry and boring, but God uses a genealogy to show us his glory and worth! The Lord, who is sovereign over the nations, weaves his redemptive plan within the apparent chaos of the world. Let's now begin with the first part of the main idea:

1. The Lord, who is sovereign over the nations. . .

If you have little headings listed in your Bibles, you might see something like, "Nations Descended from Noah" written over chapter 10. Then we read, "These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood."¹ Then in verse 2, we begin reading about the sons of Japheth. In verse 6, we read about the sons of Ham, and in verse 21, we read about the sons of Shem. Each section for each son of Noah concludes with something about how these families are divided "by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations."² So, when you look at these lists, you find individual names and also names of areas and nations. This makes this genealogy quite unique.

Uniqueness in type. From a genealogical perspective, this type of genealogy is understood as a national genealogy. It's a genealogy that not merely tells us who was born from whom, but it tells us how nations came to be and which nations have alliances with each other.

Uniqueness in being set apart from other records. This is actually a very unique genealogy here in Genesis because, in the ancient world of wandering Israel's day, there is *no* record of other religious, national groups writing down a genealogy of nations. Did you hear that? What we find instead is an emphasis on an individual nation and how they are the supreme one. But here, in Genesis, we have a genealogy of the nations, and it doesn't emphasize one nation over another per se. In reality, Israel isn't even mentioned here because it doesn't exist yet. But God is over all!

Uniqueness of the numbering. If you count all the names in the genealogy here, you'll notice that they total to the number 70. Now, I do not believe that we should interpret all of Scripture with numerology, but when the Scripture emphasize numbers, we ought to pay attention to it. At the end of Genesis, we have Abraham's offspring numbering 70 as well. In the ancient world, the numbers 7 and 10 were numbers for wholeness. To have a genealogy numbering 7x10 is wholeness to the ultimate degree. And so, what we see in chapter 10 is that God is over all the inhabitants of the earth. They have been fruitful, and they have multiplied. All the nations are over the earth according to God's ordained plan.

What do these realities speak to then? Well, in chapter 9, God just spoke through Noah to both bless and curse. Now we are looking at the blessed children and the cursed one. Is God over all of this? Yes. God isn't simply the God who is the sovereign over one nation or one little people group. God is over the individuals, the clans, languages, lands, and nations of all people! God is sovereign – in control – over everyone. Israel's God is over them all. And, we can extend that truth to us today. If you are a follower of Jesus, Yahweh is your God and he is *still* and always has been over all the nations! He's over the curse and he also will see his blessing prosper! The Lord is sovereign over the nations. And he is sovereign over the nations in the midst of

2. . . .the apparent chaos of the world.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 10:1.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 10:31.

Where do I get “chaos” in this genealogy. Ok, well, here’s where the fun of Bible study and learning about ancient genealogical techniques comes in! First, let’s again remember that in chapter 9, we read about the curse on Canaan. We then enter into chapter 10, and read about Japheth first. The names are neatly ordered. In addition to this genealogy having 70 names, Japheth’s and Shem’s genealogies are filled with numbers of people (when totaled) that are divisible by 7. There’s a sense of completeness and wholeness communicated in these genealogies. However, in Ham’s genealogy, there’s no divisible of 7 when adding the people up. From an ancient reader’s perspective, that’s noticeable. It’s not just coincidence that Shem and Japheth’s are ordered and Ham’s is disordered. The genealogies are communicating blessing and curse.

There is chaos and curse in this world. And then you read the names in Ham’s list. To the wandering Israelites, they would recognize the names. And, maybe most of us here would recognize the names, too: Egypt, Cush, Sheba, Babylon, and Nineveh. As I mentioned last week, many of Ham’s descendants created nations that were glorious, and to the Israelites, they would not think of these nations as cursed. They would think of them as blessed. But again, how God writes about these nations reveals that while they have alliances and even are great in the world’s eyes, they are under the chaos of judgment and the curse.

We see that truth of judgment more clearly when we get a short explanation of one man in Ham’s lineage. As I said in a previous genealogy we went through, when an individual is highlighted, that means they’re important to note. In this genealogy, there are additional comments made about only two people. One is with a man named Nimrod, the other is with a man named Peleg. We’re going to focus here on Nimrod. Let’s read verses 8-12 together: ⁸**Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man.** ⁹**He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.”** ¹⁰**The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.** ¹¹**From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and** ¹²**Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.** ³

Who is Nimrod? He was the first to be a mighty man? **What does that mean?** And why is there a phrase, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord?” Well, the word of “hunter” here in the ancient Hebrew also carries with it the idea of being a tyrant. In the ancient world, you proved your power even through your hunting capabilities. And so, here, it’s not just saying that Nimrod was a great hunter. Nimrod is ruthless. So, what does the phrase “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord” mean? I used to wonder if this was a compliment. As if God was saying, “Look at how good a hunter Nimrod is!” Kind of like when hunting season comes and people post their pictures of what they got and wives or parents are proud of their relative for what they got. But that’s not what this means. When you understand that “mighty hunter” references being a tyrant. You understand that “before the Lord” indicates that even God himself judges Nimrod as a ruthless tyrant. So, people in their pride might say, **“Even the Lord says Nimrod is a ruthless tyrant, so watch out!”**

Is this the kind of world you want to live in? It’s no surprise then that we read that from Nimrod comes Babel and Nineveh. Civilizations that were magnificently powerful and also ruthless. Kingdoms that elevated human strength and power. Civilizations that acted just like Cain and said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Meaning, civilizations sought to make much of themselves and not much of God and others.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 10:8–12.

Can you relate? Can you see how the nations of this world still function like this in many ways? Can you see how your own heart can function at seeking to elevate yourself above God and his gracious ways? And, as a result, you hurt others and rebel against God.

Yet, even though God's judgment over Nimrod is that he's a ruthless tyrant. That doesn't mean Nimrod was more powerful than God. God cursed Ham – and that includes God's cursing of Nimrod, Babylon and Nineveh! Even though the ancient Israelites could be tempted to think that these nations are the successful and powerful ones. Even though the Israelites could say that they wander while the sons of Ham have Kingdoms that have enslaved them and fight against them, the Israelites can trust the Lord is over them all because underneath all this genealogy, there's no wholeness. In looking at the genealogy and seeing the names don't divide by 7, you see that these nations have no good foundation. Their foundation is on sand and they will crumble. The same is true today. This world is going to be judged by God. I value Martin Luther's words in his hymns *A Mighty Fortress: **And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him.*** Do you know this God? Have you been introduced to him? Do you love and trust him? The Lord, who is sovereign over the nations is sovereign over the apparent chaos. And in the midst of the apparent chaos, he

3. . . .weaves his redemptive plan. . . .

In chapter 9, we read, "**Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.**"⁴ Or, slave. I word this as "weave" not because the word is communicated here in this genealogy, but I wanted to communicate that in the midst of a world where it looks like everything is just moving on and that God appears to be silent, he is still at work. I mean, God promised that Canaan would be the slave, but who was enslaved to Egypt? Shem! The Israelites were. So we read this genealogy and can say that when it appears as though what's happening is directly opposite to what God promised, God is at work!

Where do we see that God is at work? Well, this genealogy ends somewhat like the genealogy in chapter 5. We get to a guy named Lamech. He makes a brief comment about Noah, and we realize something profound is about to happen through Noah. In chapter 10, we get to a guy named Eber. He has two sons. One son is named Joktan and the other Peleg. In addition to Nimrod – a relative of Ham – Peleg has something to be said about him. So, we have an offspring of the cursed Ham, and an offspring of the blessed Shem.

What I find to be absolutely fascinating is that more is said of Nimrod than Peleg. This just reminds me of God's curse pronounced to the serpent. The serpent will bruise the heel, but the seed of the woman will crush the head. God doesn't have to say much for us to have hope! We're reading this genealogy, we read name after name after name. We notice Nimrod, and then we get to Shem and something different shows up. Read verse 25 with me: **To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan.**⁵

We're just told that in Peleg's days, the earth was divided. And Peleg's name means division. This idea of division is not so much meaning that everyone was against each other. Instead, it's communicating more of what the apostle Paul had said in Acts 17:26: ²⁶ **And he made from one man every nation of mankind**

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:26.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 10:25.

to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. . .⁶

God has divided Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Peleg comes from Shem who is blessed. Chaos seems to reign, but God is in control of it all. God made a promise to Adam and Eve to crush the serpent and to bring a rescuer. God made a promise to Noah to never flood the entire earth like he had done so that people might know his kindness and turn to him. God here orders the earth for where all people groups will live. And why does he do this? To draw people to himself. The apostle Paul went on in Acts 17 to say, **“²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. . .”⁷**

God is over all. What a comfort to the Israelites to know that God is even over Nimrod-like nations. What a comfort it is to us! And also, what urgency people ought to feel to respond to the Lord in his kindnesses, too. If you haven't turned to the Lord for wholeness and cleansing from your sin, why not today? Do you feel the chaos of the world? Do you know your own chaos?

You see, we discover that through Peleg comes Abraham, and God promises that through Abraham, all the nations will be blessed. Ultimately, that promise to Abraham culminates in Jesus! And do you know what happens after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven? There's a day people call Pentecost. We read about it earlier in the service today from Acts 2. On that day, people from various languages were in Jerusalem, and followers of Jesus were miraculously empowered by the Spirit to speak the good news of Jesus and his kingdom! Many people ended up turning from their sins and trusting Jesus! They were introduced to the Lord and they trusted him. And then, they unified in Jesus' new creation, his new kingdom! The small group of disciples grew to 3,000, and they've been growing and expanding ever since. We are a result of that event 2,000 years ago!

We can resonate with this Genesis 10 genealogy. Even though this world is broken, God is sovereign over it all. Even though it seems the world might win, God is sovereign over it all. He sent Jesus to take the punishment our sins deserved. And on the cross, it seemed like the world won, but Jesus rose from the dead to conquer sin and death. And now Jesus reigns to draw people from every tribe, nation, and tongue to himself. And Jesus has sent his Spirit to empower us to speak his glorious good news to the world around us so that they might be introduced to the Lord, too! And someday, Jesus will return and people from all over the world, throughout all time periods, will enter into a new Kingdom where Jesus reigns and we will be at peace with God forever and ever! Are you a son of Ham or are you a child of faith in King Jesus?

Again, I have a question for you. Are you a child of faith? Or are you going to embrace the curse and reject the Lord? **When you hear that the Lord, who is sovereign over the nations, weaves his redemptive plan within the apparent chaos of the world, do you simply find that to be an interesting fact or does this comfort and compel your heart to commune with the Lord himself? You've been re-introduced to God, will you continue to receive his grace or continue to turn from him?**

If you are hesitating to trust, why? If you are trusting him, rejoice! Whatever the Spirit is showing you now, I pray you'd respond in trust and joy in the Lord.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ac 17:26.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ac 17:26–27.

