

# CHAPTER 10

This chapter shows more particularly what was said in general (~~Gen~~Genesis 9:19), concerning the three sons of Noah, that “of them was the whole earth overspread;” and the fruit of that blessing (~~Gen~~Genesis 9:1, 7), “replenish the earth.” It is the only certain account extant of the origin of nations; and yet perhaps there is no nation but that of the Jews that can be confident from which of these seventy fountains (for so many there are here) it derives its streams. Through the want of early records, the mixtures of people, the revolutions of nations, and distance of time, the knowledge of the lineal descent of the present inhabitants of the earth is lost; nor were any genealogies preserved but those of the Jews, for the sake of the Messiah, only in this chapter we have a brief account,

- I.** Of the posterity of Japheth (v. 2-5).
- II.** The posterity of Ham (v. 6-20), and in this particular notice is taken of Nimrod (v. 8-10).
- III.** The posterity of Shem (v. 21, etc.).

## ~~Gen~~GENESIS 10:1-5

### THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

Moses begins with Japheth's family, either because he was the eldest, or because his family lay remotest from Israel and had least concern with them at the time when Moses wrote, and therefore he mentions that race very briefly, hastening to give an account of the posterity of Ham, who were Israel's enemies and of Shem, who were Israel's ancestors; for it is the church that the scripture is designed to be the history of, and of the nations of the world only as they were some way or other related to Israel and interested in the affairs of Israel. Observe,

- 1.** Notice is taken that the sons of Noah had sons born to them after the flood, to repair and rebuild the world of mankind which the flood had ruined. He that had killed now makes alive.

2. The posterity of Japheth were allotted to the isles of the Gentiles (v. 5), which were solemnly, by lot, after a survey, divided among them, and probably this island of ours among the rest; all places beyond the sea from Judea are called *isles* (<sup><2052></sup>Jeremiah 25:22), and this directs us to understand that promise (<sup><2404></sup>Isaiah 42:4), *the isles shall wait for his law*, of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ.

## <1106> GENESIS 10:6-14

### THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

That which is observable and improvable in these verses is the account here given of Nimrod, v. 8-10. He is here represented as a great man in his day: *He began to be a mighty one in the earth*, that is, whereas those that went before him were content to stand upon the same level with their neighbours, and though every man bore rule in his own house yet no man pretended any further, Nimrod's aspiring mind could not rest here; he was resolved to tower above his neighbours, not only to be eminent among them, but to lord it over them. The same spirit that actuated the giants before the flood (who became *mighty men, and men of renown*, <sup><1064></sup>Genesis 6:4), now revived in him, so soon was that tremendous judgment which the pride and tyranny of those mighty men brought upon the world forgotten. Note, There are some in whom ambition and affectation of dominion seem to be bred in the bone; such there have been and will be, notwithstanding the wrath of God often revealed from heaven against them. Nothing on this side hell will humble and break the proud spirits of some men, in this like Lucifer, <sup><2444></sup>Isaiah 14:14, 15. Now,

**I.** Nimrod was a great hunter; with this he began, and for this became famous to a proverb. Every great hunter is, in remembrance of him, called a *Nimrod*.

**1.** Some think he did good with his hunting, served his country by ridding it of the wild beasts which infested it, and so insinuated himself into the affections of his neighbours, and got to be their prince. Those that exercise authority either are, or at least would be called, *benefactors*, <sup><1225></sup>Luke 22:25.

2. Others think that under pretence of hunting he gathered men under his command, in pursuit of another game he had to play, which was to make himself master of the country and to bring them into subjection. He was a *mighty hunter*, that is, he was a violent invader of his neighbours' rights and properties, and a persecutor of innocent men, carrying all before him, and endeavouring to make all his own by force and violence. He thought himself a mighty prince, but *before the Lord* (that is, in God's account) he was but a *mighty hunter*. Note, Great conquerors are but great hunters. Alexander and Caesar would not make such a figure in scripture-history as they do in common history; the former is represented in prophecy but as a he-goat pushing, <sup>2183</sup> Daniel 8:5. Nimrod was a mighty hunter *against* the Lord, so the Septuagint; that is,

(1.) He set up idolatry, as Jeroboam did, for the confirming of his usurped dominion. That he might set up a new government, he set up a new religion upon the ruin of the primitive constitution of both. *Babel was the mother of harlots*. Or,

(2.) He carried on his oppression and violence in defiance of God himself, daring Heaven with his impieties, as if he and his huntsmen could out-brave the Almighty, and were a match for the Lord of hosts and all his armies. *As if it were a small thing to weary men, he thinks to weary my God also*, <sup>2183</sup> Isaiah 7:13.

II. Nimrod was a great ruler: *The beginning of his kingdom was Babel*, v. 10. Some way or other, by arts or arms, he got into power, either being chosen to it or forcing his way to it; and so laid the foundations of a monarchy, which was afterwards a head of gold, and the terror of the mighty, and bade fair to be universal. It does not appear that he had any right to rule by birth; but either his fitness for government recommended him, as some think, to an election, or by power and policy he advanced gradually, and perhaps insensibly, into the throne. See the antiquity of civil government, and particularly that form of it which lodges the sovereignty in a single person. If Nimrod and his neighbours began, other nations soon learned to incorporate under one head for their common safety and welfare, which, however it began, proved so great a blessing to the world that things were reckoned to go ill indeed when there *was no king in Israel*.

**III.** Nimrod was a great builder. Probably he was architect in the building of Babel, and there he began his kingdom; but, when his project to rule all the sons of Noah was baffled by the confusion of tongues, *out of that land he went forth into Assyria* (so the margin reads it, v. 11) *and built Nineveh, etc.*, that, having built these cities, he might command them and rule over them. Observe, in Nimrod, the nature of ambition.

- 1.** It is boundless. Much would have more, and still cries, *Give, give.*
- 2.** It is restless. Nimrod, when he had four cities under his command, could not be content till he had four more.
- 3.** It is expensive. Nimrod will rather be at the charge of rearing cities than not have the honour of ruling them. The spirit of building is the common effect of a spirit of pride.
- 4.** It is daring, and will stick at nothing. Nimrod's name signifies rebellion, which (if indeed he did abuse his power to the oppression of his neighbours) teaches us that tyrants to men are rebels to God, and their *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.*

## GENESIS 10:15-20

### THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

Observe here,

- 1.** The account of the posterity of Canaan, of the families and nations that descended from him, and of the land they possessed, is more particular than of any other in this chapter, because these were the nations that were to be subdued before Israel, and their land was in process of time to become the holy land, *Immanuel's land*; and this God had an eye to when, in the mean time, he cast the lot of that accursed devoted race in that spot of ground which he had selected for his own people; this Moses takes notice of, <sup>6518</sup>Deuteronomy 32:8, *When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*
- 2.** By this account it appears that the posterity of Canaan were numerous, and rich, and very pleasantly situated; and yet Canaan was under a curse, a

divine curse, and not a curse causeless. Note, Those that are under the curse of God may yet perhaps thrive and prosper greatly in this world; for we cannot know love or hatred, the blessing or the curse, by what is before us, but by what is within us, <sup><012></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:1. The curse of God always works really and always terribly: but perhaps it is a secret curse, a curse to the soul, and does not work visibly, or a slow curse, and does not work immediately; but sinners are by it reserved for, and bound over to, a day of wrath. Canaan here has a better land than either Shem or Japheth, and yet they have a better lot, for they inherit the blessing.

## <sup><012></sup>GENESIS 10:21-32

### THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

Two things especially are observable in this account of the posterity of Shem: —

**I.** The description of Shem, v. 21. We have not only his name, *Shem*, which signifies *a name*, but two titles to distinguish him by: —

**1.** He was *the father of all the children of Eber*. Eber was his great grandson; but why should he be called the father of all *his* children, rather than of all Arphaxad's, or Salah's, etc.? Probably because Abraham and his seed, God's covenant-people, not only descended from Heber, but from him were called *Hebrews*; <sup><013></sup>Genesis 14:13, *Abram the Hebrew*. Paul looked upon it as his privilege that he was a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, <sup><015></sup>Philippians 3:5. Eber himself, we may suppose, was a man eminent for religion in a time of general apostasy, and a great example of piety to his family; and, the holy tongue being commonly called from him the *Hebrew*, it is probable that he retained it in his family, in the confusion of Babel, as a special token of God's favour to him; and from him the professors of religion were called *the children of Eber*. Now, when the inspired penman would give Shem an honourable title, he calls him *the father of the Hebrews*. Though when Moses wrote this, they were a poor despised people, bond-slaves in Egypt, yet, being God's people, it was an honour to a man to be akin to them. As Ham, though he had many sons, is disowned by being called *the father of Canaan*, on whose seed the *curse* was entailed (<sup><012></sup>Genesis 9:22), so Shem, though he had many sons, is dignified with the title of *the father of Eber*, on whose seed the blessing

was entailed. Note, a family of saints is more truly honourable than a family of nobles, Shem's holy seed than Ham's royal seed, Jacob's twelve patriarchs than Ishmael's twelve princes, <sup><172></sup>Genesis 17:20. Goodness is true greatness.

**2.** He was *the brother of Japheth the elder*, by which it appears that, though Shem is commonly put first, he was not Noah's first-born, but Japheth was older. But why should this also be put as part of Shem's title and description, that he *was the brother of Japheth*, since it had been, in effect, said often before? And was he not as much brother to Ham? Probably this was intended to signify the union of the Gentiles with the Jews in the church. The sacred historian had mentioned it as Shem's honour that he was the father of the Hebrews; but, lest Japheth's seed should therefore be looked upon as for ever shut out from the church, he here reminds us that he *was the brother of Japheth*, not in birth only, but in blessing; for *Japheth was to dwell in the tents of Shem*. Note,

**(1.)** Those are brethren in the best manner that are so by grace, and that meet in the covenant of God and in the communion of saints.

**(2.)** God, in dispensing his grace, does not go by seniority, but the younger sometimes gets the start of the elder in coming into the church; *so the last shall be first and the first last*.

**II.** The reason of the name of Peleg (v. 25): Because *in his days* (that is, about the time of his birth, when his name was given him), *was the earth divided* among the children of men that were to inhabit it; either when Noah divided it by an orderly distribution of it, as Joshua divided the land of Canaan by lot, or when, upon their refusal to comply with that division, God, in justice, divided them by the confusion of tongues: whichsoever of these was the occasion, pious Heber saw cause to perpetuate the remembrance of it in the name of his son; and justly may our sons be called by the same name, for in our days, in another sense, is the earth, the church, most wretchedly divided.