

A Table for Seventy Nations

Genesis 10:1 These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

² The sons of **Japheth**: Gomer, **Magog**, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, **Kittim**, and **Dodanim**.

⁵ From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

⁶ The sons of **Ham**: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush fathered **Nimrod**; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. (Gen 10:8 KJV)

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.

¹³ Egypt fathered **Ludim**, **Anamim**, **Lehabim**, **Naphtuhim**,

¹⁴ **Pathrusim**, **Casluhim** (from whom the **Philistines** came), and Caphtorim.

¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth,

¹⁶ and the **Jebusites**, the **Amorites**, the **Girgashites**,

¹⁷ the **Hivites**, the **Arkites**, the **Sinites**,

¹⁸ the **Arvadites**, the **Zemarites**, and the **Hamathites**. **Afterward** the clans of the Canaanites dispersed.

¹⁹ And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

²¹ To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born.

²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.

³⁰ The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east.

³¹ These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

³² These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Genesis 10:1-32



Spreading a Table

The chapter today is often called The Table of Nations, and it is a unique chapter in the Bible. In fact, some say it is unique in all the recorded annals of ancient history.¹ It is a list of nations that sprang forth from the loins of the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God told Adam, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). We saw in Genesis 4-5 that this is exactly what the human race did. But man was corrupt from within and corrupted from above, so God destroyed us in a great and terrible flood, all except eight souls in a glorious ark of covenantal love. These souls included Noah and his wife as well as his three sons and their wives (1 Pet 3:20). After they came off the ark, God reestablished this blessing saying to

¹ “The tenth chapter of Genesis ... stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework. ... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document.” William F. Albright, “Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands,” an appended article in Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, n.d.), 30. **GOING DEEPER:** Others suggest partial parallels in the genealogy of Hammurabi and in Egyptian lists of conquered cities/nations. See John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 55-56. I would further add that something like Homer’s *Theogony* is similar in some ways. What is especially interesting in this regard is how the *Theogony* is basically a genealogy of the gods. In the Jewish/Christian SibOr 3.110–15 (see also 1.293), Shem, Ham, and Japheth are called Cronos and Titan and Iapetus (where Iapetus is the Greek version of Japheth). Yet unlike *Theogony*, the Bible does not present any of these figures as divine (though it may present Nimrod as a Nephilim).

Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). This is what the Table of Nations describes—how the sons of Noah took God seriously.

It is usually called a table rather than a genealogy. A table in this sense is simply a list (think of something like a math table or a Table of Contents in a book). Genealogies are usually names of *individuals* descended from one after the other in a long line with *ages* given. But in Genesis 10, no ages are mentioned (unlike 5:1–32 and 11:10–32). Also, while some of the names are personal—e.g., Japheth, Nimrod, Peleg, others are clearly *place names*—e.g., Sidon, Sheba—, names of *peoples*—e.g., Ludim, Caphtorim—or *tribes*—e.g., Amorites, Girgashites.² The purpose of this table is the subject of our sermon, and it extends far beyond Israel, with which most genealogies in the Bible are concerned. In fact, curiously and importantly, *Israel is not in the Table of Nations*, and will not even exist until several generations after the Table ends its count.³

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 215.

³ This fact is very important for understanding the original meaning of a related passage that we will look at later: *Deuteronomy 32:8*. This verse has a textual variant. The Hebrew talks about the nations being divided according to the number of the “sons of Israel” while the much older LXX reads, “sons of God.” It is almost universally accepted that the verse refers back to the Table of Nations. However, it makes no sense for God to divide the nations

So how do you preach something that is just a long, long list of names? How would you do it? If you were like most pastors today, you probably wouldn't. Move along. Move along. If you had the nerve to do it, maybe you would just camp the names, their meanings, the geography, and the history. I'll do a little of this today. But this is a sermon, and sermons need to do more than that. Many Reformed pastors and commentaries head in a good direction, sling-shotting off what has come before this, especially the promise given to Eve of a Seed that would crush the head of the serpent (**Gen 3:15**), into a sermon that touches on Christ.⁴ I'll do some of this today too, though I think that the idea of **the Seed-line is more specifically addressed after the Tower of Babel** story rather than here, before it.

I've spent some time thinking about how to preach our passage today, and I've decided that I want to give you **a biblical theology of the list**. This may sound strange, a biblical theology of a list of names? But believe it or not, the rest of the Bible has a great deal to say about **Genesis 10**. What it says

according to the number of the sons of Israel, if Israel does not even exist. See the devastating argument against the "sons of Israel" variant and in favor of adopting the "sons of God" as the original text in Michael S. Heiser, ["Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 \(Jan-Mar, 2001\): 52-74.](#)

⁴ For example, R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004);

is related both to heaven and earth, to heavenly beings and human beings, to prophecy and fulfillment, to Adam and Eve and covenant, and most of all to the Lord Jesus. If we want to truly understand why God wanted this chapter in the Bible, we must go to the rest of Scripture to learn what it has to say.

Among the passages we will be looking at today are **Genesis 17** (and the name change of Abram to Abraham), **Deuteronomy 32**, **Psalms 2, 82, and 89**, **Matthew 22**, **Luke 10**, **Acts 17**, and **Revelation 5 and 18**. Each are reflections on the Table of Nations in one way or another and as we will see, the ultimate focus of their message ends in Christ. They do this not through the “seed” theology (that is an undercurrent) as much as through the key to understanding our passage—the **number seventy**, and the idea of **nations** or Gentiles. Through this number and later comments on the nations, the Bible develops the Table in fascinating yet mysterious (to modern people), supernatural, and redemptive ways.

In developing the table of nations, I hope to move away from an abstract list toward a wonderful, concrete supper-table, where **many are called** to feast at a great wedding banquet. This is the story of the Bible prior to the existence of Israel. This is the story of the Bible in God changing the name

of Abram to Abraham—father of many nations. This is the story of Genesis 10 and the Table of Nations.

Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

Our passage is **Genesis 10:1-32**. It is a chapter of the Bible that stands between the flood and the tower of Babel. **Vs. 1** connects us back to the flood saying, “These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.” The phrase “the generations of” is the fourth of ten natural divisions in the book of Genesis—the *toledoth* (generations) formulas, so this begins a new section of Genesis. **Vs. 32** connects us forward to the Tower episode saying, “These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.”

The idea of **spreading abroad** is the result of the tower of Babel story. The Hebrew actually uses four different words to convey this same idea. In Genesis 11 it uses the words *puts* () three times (**11:4, 8, 9**). At least in the Torah it is often associated with a curse as in **Deuteronomy 4:27**, “The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.” This is not a willful scattering as if they decided to

leave of their own accord, but something that happens to them from an outside cause.

The first word used for a kind of scattering in our story appeared in **Gen 9:19**, “These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.” This is the word *naphats* and it is used in **Psalm 2:9** in a passage I’ll come back to later today, “You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash (*naphats*) them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

Two other words are used. One is *palag*. It is used as a pun on one of only two names in our Table that are elaborated. His name is **Peleg**, “for in his days the earth was divided (*palag*)” (**Gen 10:25**). The LXX has the word *diamerizo* and this is the word it uses to translate **Deuteronomy 32:8** which says, “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided (*diamerizo*) mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.” Finally, the word actually used in our verse (**Gen 10:32**) is *parad*. *Parad* is the Hebrew word that is found in Deuteronomy 32:8.

Let me summarize this before moving on. Genesis 9-11 uses four different words to convey the scattering abroad that occurred at the tower of Babel (see chart below). Sometimes it

picks a word to make a word play. Other times a word specifically conveys that something negative is happening (like a curse). Finally, other passages that are related directly to the Table of Nations in the Bible’s later reflection of this episode all use words found in our story today.

Words Used in the “Scattering” of the Nations				
Gen 9:19	<i>naphats</i>	“disperse”/“dash”	Psalm 2:9	
Gen 10:25	<i>palag</i> <i>diamerizo</i> (Greek)	“divided”	Gen 10:25 Deut 32:8 (LXX)	play on “Peleg”
Gen 10:32	<i>parad</i>	“divided”	Deut 32:8	
Gen 11:4, 8, 9	<i>puts</i>	“scatter”	Deut 4:27	

One of the important passages to reflect on Genesis 10 is [Deuteronomy 32:7-9](#). In fact, it may be the most important. One scholar who did his dissertation on this calls it the “Deuteronomy 32 Worldview,” it is that important. Deuteronomy 32 is the Song of Moses. We have seen [Deuteronomy 32:10-11](#) in our study of Genesis. In this passage Moses reflects upon the *tohu*—the howling waste—where God found Israel and then like a bird “[hovered](#)” over him as he began to lead him out of Egypt. This imagery is taken directly from [Genesis 1:2](#) (and only from there, for these words are not used in any other verse in the Torah), and in borrowing this language Moses is saying that God is

making a new creation out of Israel. He is creating this people from nothing by the power of his Word and Spirit.

The verses I have in mind this morning take place immediately preceding these. **Deuteronomy 32:7-9** says, “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.” Moses is talking about how God created Israel out of nothing. To do it, he asks us to remember the days of old. To what time in the past does he refer?

He has in mind Genesis 10-11 and the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel stories, and for this reason if we want to know why our passage is in the Bible, we have to understand Deuteronomy 32:7-9. We know he has this in mind for several reasons. **First**, he uses the name of God: **Elyon** (“Most High”). This is not the covenantal name Yahweh. Nor is it the general word for God (*elohim*). It is the Gentile name for God. For example, it is the name for God used by Melchizedek (prior to Israel being a nation; **Gen 14:18-20**); it

is the name Balaam uses (Num 24:16); and so on. So the name for God used here points us to the Table of Nations.⁵

Second, it directly says that Elyon gave “the nations their inheritance (*nachal*)” and “divided mankind” and “fixed the borders of the peoples.” It uses the word *nachal*, which as we have seen is found in our passage as well as Psalm 2. What is this talking about? Paul explains to the Greek Athenians, “[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26). In bringing the gospel to the Greeks, the Apostle believed it was vital that they remember something about the Table of Nations. Hopefully you will understand why before we are finished today, for it is a powerful apologetic, and one that needs to be recaptured for Christ in our day.

Third and finally, it says that these borders were fixed “according to the number of the sons of God.”⁶ Some of your translations might say the number of “the sons of Israel.” This is based on the Hebrew text. The oldest version we have of the Hebrew goes back to only about 1,000 A.D. But we know that at a very few places, the Jews after the destruction

⁵ Curiously, it is also the title used by demons in Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28; and Acts 16:17.

⁶ Note the convergence of “sons of God” and Elyon (GK: *Hupsistos*) in Luke 1:32, 35 and 6:35.

of their temple actually changed the language of the original to fit a theological interpretation, and some scholars speculate that they did this because Christianity was gaining too many converts because a divine God-man was being claimed to be the Savior, claiming to be the “Son of God.”

“Son of God” is the original and crucial language. Far older LXX version(s) predating the NT even, read “sons of God.” As Dr. Heiser has persuasively argued,⁷ the sons of God were heavenly beings. We saw them back in **Genesis 6:1-4**, and according to 2 Peter and Jude, they were partially responsible for the flood.

Curiously, “**Son of the Most High**” (Elyon) is a title that the angel predicts Jesus will carry (**Luke 1:32, 35**). Later, in John’s Gospel, the Pharisees become irate that Jesus is equating himself with the Father. So he quotes **Psalms 82:6**

⁷ Michael S. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 (Jan-Mar, 2001): 52-74. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1278&context=lts_fac_pubs&sei-redirect=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3Dheiser%2520deut%252032%253A8%2520sons%2520of%2520god%2520commons%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D1%26ved%3D0CCkQFjAA%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fdigitalcommons.liberty.edu%252Fcgi%252Fviewcontent.cgi%253Farticle%253D1278%2526context%253Dlts_fac_pubs%26ei%3DOWqpUqm8McH5oATWuoGYCg%26usg%3DAFQjCNFLU80xAFpWW15WiKuawH1rSuSwrQ%26sig2%3DNQwJ9-MeoR916zkDnun2g#search=%22heiser%20deut%2032%3A8%20sons%20god%20commons%22

and the language that there are other “sons of Elyon (God).” The Pharisees know full well, not the least reason being because of Psalm 82:1 speaks of gods in the divine council, that there are heavenly beings called sons of God. They also understand that Jesus is not saying that they—the Pharisees—are gods, but that He—Jesus—is a god, but more than that, for he is equal with the Father.⁸ The Pharisees only get more irate and want to stone him for blasphemy.

So the original reading is “sons of God,” not sons of Israel. The passage has in mind Genesis 10, and Israel is not even in Genesis 10. In fact, Israel will not exist for many centuries after this, so it makes no sense for God to divide the nations up according to something that does not even exist. “Sons of Israel” was simply a convenient Rabbinical interpretation of the phrase “sons of God” that they added in order to de-supernaturalize the text, because they did not accept Jesus as Messiah.

Seventy Nations

How could they do this and get away with it? Because it talks about the “number” of sons. Everyone is agreed that the

⁸ Michael S. Heiser, “You’ve Seen One Elohim, You’ve Seen Them All? A Critique of Mormonism’s Use of Psalm 82,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 221–266. <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/19/1/S00013-5176a81cbf97e13Heiser.pdf>

number in mind is “seventy.” There are seventy sons of Jacob that go down into Egypt (Ex 1:5), and so they justified their interpretation that way. But as we have seen, Israel doesn’t exist in Genesis 10. But curiously, the number of the *sons of God* in Jewish tradition, like their neighbors at Ugarit, also put this number at seventy. Going back again to Psalm 82, it begins by talking about a “divine council” (82:1) of heavenly sons of God, a council that God is angry at and is about to judge. Psalm 89 explains more about this council saying, “Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings (lit: sons of God) is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you” (Ps 89:5-8)? Clearly, this council is in the sky.

There were seventy members of the divine council, seventy being a symbolic number rather than a literal one. The targum of Deut 32:8 shows you this tradition saying, “He cast the lot among the seventy angels, the princes of the

nations.”⁹ “Princes of the nations” is the language of Daniel’s Prince of Persia (Dan 10:13) and Prince of Greece (10:20) and Prince of Israel (Dan 12:1), all of which are heavenly beings.

In fact, the Apostle knows exactly what he is doing in raising this issue with the Greeks, for he has not only Deuteronomy 32 and Genesis 10-11 in mind, but also Plato, a Greek. Plato writes, “In the days of old the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment.” And in another place, “Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order...”¹⁰

⁹ See also 1 Enoch 89:59; 3 Enoch 17:8, 18:2-3; 30:2; b.Sukk 55b; NumR 14:12; Midraš Tehillim 68:6 [to Ps 68:12]; m.Sot 7:5; b.Shab 88b. Sometimes the number is “72” rather than “70.” This is not a significant change, as both have their own symbolic meaning, 72 being more esoteric (related to the ancient science of geometry) than 70. Ugarit confirms this interpretation with its seventy sons of El, clearly heavenly divine beings (CTA 4.6.38-59; 12.2.44-49; etc).

¹⁰ Plato, *Critias*. **GOING DEEPER:** He goes on, “... Hephæstus and Athene, who were brother and sister, and sprang from the same father, having a common nature, and being united also in the love of philosophy and art, both obtained as their common portion this land, which was naturally adapted for wisdom and virtue; and there they implanted brave children of the soil, and put into their minds the order of government; their names are preserved, but their actions have disappeared by reason of the destruction (the Flood) of those who received the tradition, and the lapse of ages. . . Poseidon, receiving for his lot the island of Atlantis, begat children by a mortal woman, and settled them in a part of the island, which I will describe.” The Egyptians believed the same thing, “Grant [Merneptah] a lifetime like that of Re (Ra), to avenge those injured by any land; Egypt has been assigned him as portion, He owns it forever to protect its people.” (*Poetical Stela of Merneptah* 15). And one more from the Jews, this time from the book of Jubilees (“Little Genesis”), “And he sanctified them and gathered them from all of the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might

Plato is only remembering what Deuteronomy also recalls—several times. The word “allot” is used in **Deuteronomy 32:8-9**. The same word is used of the “**host of heaven**” earlier in the book to warn Israel not to turn to them and worship them, since they have been allotted to the peoples (see below). The host of heaven is what we sing about each week in the Doxology, even as Nehemiah said, “**You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you**” (**Neh 9:6**).

Deuteronomy and the Hosts of Heaven

4:19-20	17:2-3	29:26	32:7-9	32:43
"And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the <u>sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven</u> , and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted (<i>chalaq</i>) to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance (<i>nachalah</i>), as you are this day.	"If there is found among you. . . a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God. . . and has gone and served <u>other gods (elohim)</u> and worshiped them, or <u>the sun or the moon</u> or any of the <u>host of heaven</u> , which I have forbidden.	"They turned to the service of <u>other gods (elohim)</u> and worshiped them, <u>gods (elohim)</u> whom they had not experienced and whom [God] had not allotted (<i>chalaq</i>) to them."	Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. ⁸ When the Most High (<i>Elyon</i>) gave to the nations their inheritance (<i>nachal</i>), when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the <u>sons of God (benedictio elohim)</u> . ⁹ But the LORD's portion (<i>cheleq</i>) is his people, Jacob his allotted (<i>chalaq</i>) heritage (<i>nachalah</i>).	"Rejoice with him, <u>O heavens</u> ; bow down to him, <u>all gods</u> (Gk: <i>uioi theou</i>). . . And let all <u>angels</u> (Gk: <i>aggelos</i>) of the divine Strengthen themselves in him. for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land."

lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler and he will protect them and he will seek for them at the hand of his angels and at the hand of his spirits and at the hand of all of his authorities so that he might guard them and bless them and they might be his and he might be theirs henceforth and forever” (**Jub 15:31-33**).

At any rate, what has this to do with Genesis 10? The answer is, when you count out the names in the Table, most scholars agree that the number is 70. Some see 71, but Nimrod seems to be a diversion from the table, and we'll look at why in a moment. To summarize again, what we see is that the Bible speaks of an **allotting of land**. Land was divided both in heaven and on earth. As the peoples dispersed, they went to the places that God had assigned to them, and under each banner there was a heavenly being that was assigned to look over that people group. Plato and the Bible eventually agree here too, that though they originally ruled well (even as Yahweh does over Israel), these heavenly beings fell into sin and corrupted themselves and ruled poorly. I will return to this major theme at the end of the sermon, because it is vital to our story.

Deut 4:19-20 ESV	Deuteronomy 32:7-9 LXX	Deuteronomy 32:7-9 ESV	Deut 32:7-9 Pseudo-Jonathan	Plato, <i>Critias</i>
<p>¹⁹ And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and <u>the stars</u>, all the <u>host of heaven</u>, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has <u>allotted</u> (קָלַף) to all the</p>	<p>⁷ Remember <u>the days of old</u>, consider the years for past ages: ask thy father, and he shall relate to thee, thine elders, and they shall tell thee.</p> <p>⁸ When the</p>	<p>⁷ Remember <u>the days of old</u>; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.</p> <p>⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders</p>	<p>⁷ Remember <u>the days of old</u>; consider the years of every generation; read the books of the law, and they will teach you, and the books of the prophets, and they will tell you.</p> <p>⁸ When the Most High made allotment of the world unto the nations which proceeded from the sons of Noach, in the separation of the writings and languages of the</p>	<p>"In the days of old <u>the gods</u> had the whole earth distributed among them by <u>allotment</u>. There was no quarrelling; for you cannot rightly suppose that the gods did not know what was proper for each of them to have, or, knowing this, that they would seek to procure for themselves by contention that which more properly belonged to others. They all of them by just apportionment obtained what they wanted, and peopled their own districts; and when they had peopled them they tended us, their nurselings and possessions, as shepherds tend their flocks, excepting only that they did not use blows or bodily force, as shepherds do, but governed us like pilots from the stern of the vessel, which is an easy way of guiding animals, holding our souls by the rudder of persuasion according to</p>

<p>peoples under the whole heaven.</p> <p>²⁰ But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own <u>inheritance</u> (הַנְּחִלָּה), as you are this day.</p>	<p>Most High divided</p> <p>the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the <u>angels of God</u>.</p> <p>⁹ And his</p> <p>people Jacob became the <u>portion</u> (חֵלֶק) of the Lord, Israel was the line of his <u>inheritance</u> (הַנְּחִלָּה).</p>	<p>of the peoples according to the number of the <u>sons of God</u>.</p> <p>⁹ But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.</p>	<p>children of men at the time of the division, He cast the lot among <u>the seventy angels, the princes of the nations</u> with whom is the revelation to oversee the city, even at that time He established the limits of the nations according to the sum of the number of the seventy souls of Israel who went down into Mizraim.</p> <p>⁹ And when the holy people fell to the lot of the Lord of all the world, Michael opened his lips and said: Let the good portion of the Name of the Lord's Word be with Him. Gabriel opened his lips with thanksgivings, and said, Let the house of Jakob be the lot of His inheritance.</p>	<p>their own pleasure;-thus did they guide all mortal creatures. Different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order.”</p> <p>“When the divine portion began to fade away, [they] became diluted too often and too much with the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper hand, they then, being unable to bear their fortune, behaved unseemly, and to him who had an eye to see grew visibly debased. . . they were full of avarice and unrighteous power.</p> <p>Zeus, the god <u>of gods</u>, who rules according to law, and is able to see into such things, perceiving that an honourable race was in a woeful plight, and wanting to inflict punishment on them, that they might be chastened and improve, collected all the gods into their most holy habitation, which, being placed in the centre of the world, beholds all created things. And when he had called them together, he spoke.” (The rest of Critias has been lost).</p> <p>(Parallels with the judgment aspect of the <i>Critias</i> are in Psalm 2, 82 etc).</p>
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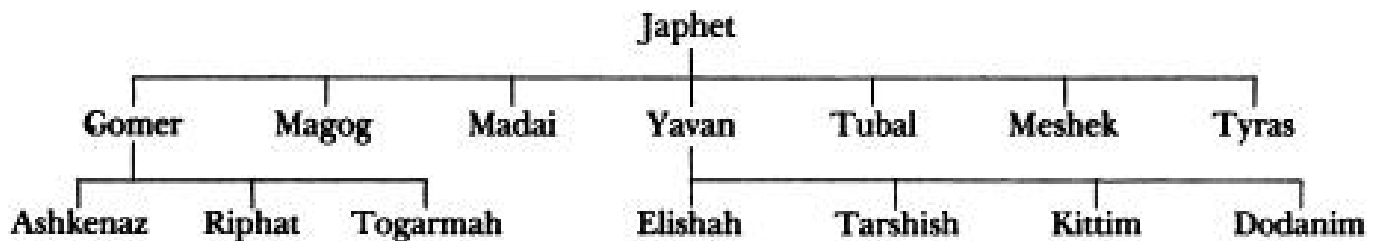
A Table of Nations

For now, let us move to the Table of Nations itself and wrap our heads around it. As I mentioned, it contains a list of **seventy names**. This list is divided into **three groups**—according to the three sons of Noah: **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**. The names it consists of include individuals, cities, peoples, and tribal names, so many times it has in mind not one person, but a whole clan of people.

Without getting into where exactly all of these people's went, I thought I would recap it the way on scholar does at the in a note to the beginning of the ancient book called the Treatise of Shem. Reminding me of a certain verse in Revelation he says, **“The land given to Ham is hot, that to**

Japheth is cold, but that to Shem is neither hot nor cold (see [Jub 8:12–30](#), esp. [vs. 18](#)).”¹¹ That’s it! Japheth goes north into Turkey, Asia, and Europe. Ham goes south into Africa. Shem does east into Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Curiously, the land of Canaan seems up for grabs *even back then*, for it is right in the middle of all three allotments.

Japheth



Japheth comes first. He has [seven sons](#) mentioned. The most famous (infamous) is probably [Magog](#) (of Gog and Magog fame; [Ezek 38-39](#)). As they prepare you for the apocalypse, Dispensationalists will tell you that this refers to Russia and Moscow. But scholars will tell you that we have no real idea where Magog is. Gomer is also mentioned in [Ezek \(38:6\)](#). Perhaps they are the Cimmerians and Scythians of eastern Russia, and if you’ve read my book on Giants, you will know that some of them are depicted as riding horses that

¹¹ James H. Charlesworth, “The Treatise of Shem,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 481 note a.

look like mini-pintos compared to their rider. These were huge, powerful, and brutal warriors of antiquity.

Scythians and Horse Size



Mini-pinto gelding like T.D.
(the old mascot for the Denver Broncos)



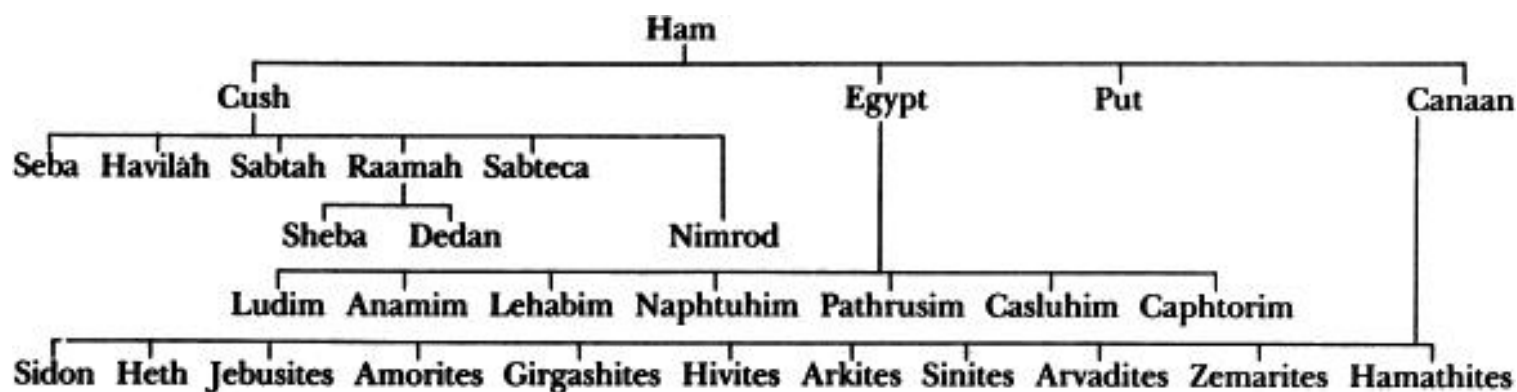
4th century B.C. Scythian horseman. Found at the Kul' Oba kurgan near Kerch (northern Black Sea). Located now in The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

I'll mention three others in the line of Japheth. The first is **Tarshish**. The Bible talks about the “**ships of Tarshish**” (**1 Kgs 10:22**; **Isa 2:16**; **Ezek 27:25**). Solomon enlisted these ships at the command of King Hiram to import gold, silver, ivory, and other exotic things from only God knows where. They would disappear for three years at a time. Since there is some reason to believe that Tarshish was a port at the edge of Spain, perhaps these ships even went to the “new world.”

Kittim and **Dodanim** are the others I want to mention. I tell you about them simply to show you that they are not individuals, but people groups. You know this from the plural ending “**-im**.” I like how the NIV puts it, “**from these**

the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language” (Gen 10:5). While I could speculate about where all these people’s went, perhaps the safest thing to say is simply that the picture we get from Russia to Spain to the great sea-faring peoples is that Japheth had the **greatest extent** of territory allotted to him. Interestingly, Japheth also has the **least space** in the text given to him. Yet, most of us in this room (as those of European decent) are descended from Japheth.

Ham



Second comes Ham. Ham has several important descendents, important for their roles as archenemies of Israel throughout the OT. Remember, Ham is the one who committed an unspeakable act in the previous chapter. God curses his son Canaan. **Canaan**, as well as **Egypt**, is one of four sons of Ham mentioned. Of course, the Canaanites and the Egyptians becomes **two of the great foes of Israel**.

Cush is Ethiopia, and it traces five sons of Cush. This is done in order to insert the one name that does not properly belong in the Table of nations, for he alone of individuals is said to father no one. Rather, he serves a different purpose. His name is **Nimrod**. It's a cool name, one that someone in our congregation joked about naming his firstborn child after ... until I told him all about Mr. Nimrod.

Nimrod means “**rebel**.” It says that **Nimrod was the first one earth to be** (KJV “began to be”) **a mighty man** (**Gen 10:8**). The word “mighty” is *gibborim*. It has been used on time previously, in Genesis 6:4. The Nephilim were *gibborim*, men of renown (men of the name-*shem*, a pun). The LXX translates it as *gigas*, and the word almost always means “giant.” Scholars have gone looking for Nimrod, and he has been identified with the likes of Hercules, Orion, Ninurta, Marduk, and Gilgamesh. I spend a lot of time dealing with this in my book on giants.

It also says that he was a “**mighty hunter**” before the LORD (**Gen 10:9**). Ninurta was a god of Assyria, and the figure most likely associated with Nimrod according to scholars.¹² **Ninurta** was also a mighty hunter. His exploits

¹² K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, “Nimrod Before And After The Bible,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83:1 (1990): 1-29. <http://www.dougvanorn.com/NimrodHTR.pdf>

were famous in ancient times. He is said to have gained eleven trophies including a seven-headed serpent, a terrible lion, a buck or stag, the mythological Anzu bird, a large crab, and a bull-man. These stories are so similar to the 12 labors of **Hercules**, that many scholars think the two figures are the same person. Among his quests, Hercules killed the Hydra, the Nemean Lion, the Cerynean Hind, the Stymphalian Birds, a crab that assisted the Hydra, and the Cretan Bull.¹³

However, our translation says that he was a mighty hunter “**before**” the LORD. Augustine was probably right to translate it as “**against**” the LORD, as this person is not hunting food to offer a sacrifice to God. He is doing it in defiance of God (see perhaps **Gen 9:3-5**).¹⁴ How would I

¹³ On these comparisons see van der Toorn, “Nimrod,” 10-11. See also J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL Le récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 17-18; the translation by Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once ... Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1987), 233-72; W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, 1987), 14-19, and in C. Bonnet and C. Jourdain-Annequin (eds.), *Héraclès. D'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée. Bilan et perspectives* (Brussels & Rome, 1992), pp.121-124; F.E. Brenk, *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background* (Stuttgart, 1999), 5-7-26.

¹⁴ The Hebrew *lipne* is a compound meaning literally “to the face.” In 2 Chron 20:12 and Est 9:2 the ESV translates it “against.” The Greek *enantoin* is translated “against” in places like Job 15:13, cf. Augustine, *City of God* 16.4.

know this? It is because though Nimrod may very well have been a giant, he serves a different purpose here.

Notice that Nimrod has a vast kingdom. It includes Babel and other towns in the land of Shinar (**Gen 10:10**). In other words, Nimrod sets up the story of the tower of Babel. The fact that Nimrod is potentially such a strange preternatural figure lends itself to the very strange things that were going on in the Babel story, but we will get to that next time. For now, just remember that Babel also becomes an archenemy of Israel in the OT. In a lesser way, if you were to ask Jonah, so does Nineveh, a town that Nimrod also built (**Gen 10:11**).

Three other things are important to mention in the list of Hamites. The first is in **vs. 14**. Egypt has many sons and these sons become great nations including the Casluhim, and it says, “from whom the Philistines came.” Do you remember the most famous Philistine? Goliath. The Philistines were a nemesis of Israel throughout the days of the Judges.

Second, it mentions a list of sons of Canaan from Sidon and Heth (**15**). These are the Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites (**16-18**) as well as the termites, appetites, stalagmites, stalactites, bagel-bites, megabytes, and mosquito-bites. OK, so the last list is not in the text. But it is a funny way to help

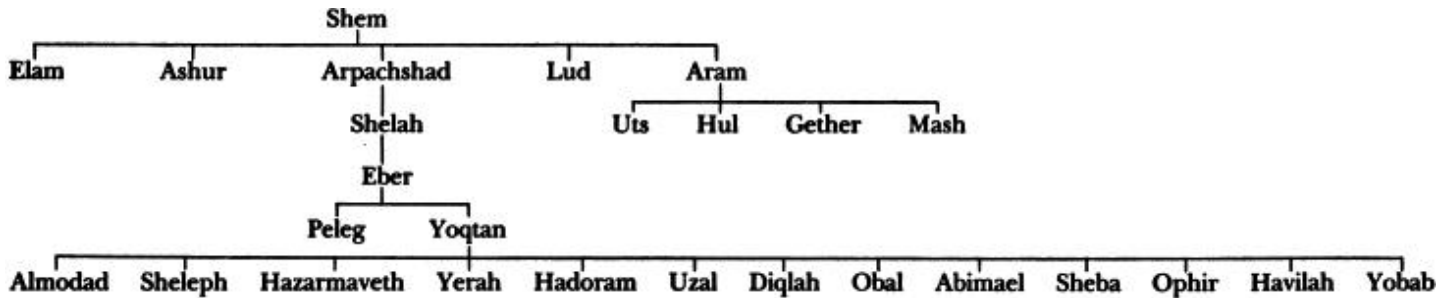
you remember that all of these “... ites” will become very important, especially in the days of Moses and Joshua, and even as early as Abraham. For these nations are listed together many times, and some of them are explicitly said to be giants (**Num 13:29-33**. See my book). Along these lines notice also that **Gaza** (**Gen 10:19**) is mentioned. This comes up in Joshua as one of the few cities where the giants remained, and from which Goliath was to spring (he came from Gath).

Finally, notice that the Canaanite territory extends down into **Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim** (**Gen 10:19**). These cities are infamous for having been destroyed by God with fire from heaven later in the book of Genesis. Are you starting to see a repeating pattern with the Hamites?

Summarizing the Hamites, all of the major arch-villains of the OT come from this lineage: Egypt, who is at first benign, but later a great villain, as well as the Canaanites, Philistines, Babylonians, Sodom and Gomorrah, and giant-clans. This is one of the main reasons that Genesis 10 is in the Bible. **It gives you the origin of the conflicts that run throughout the OT.** Those origins are found in this Table, and go back to the story previously seen with Ham and Noah’s wife. In this sense we find something very closely related to the promised Seed, and this is that there would be a

seed of Satan that would be at war throughout history with God's people. The Hamitic line is the main place where this war originates as far as Israel is concerned.

Shem



Finally, we come to the **Shemites**, or more popularly **Semites**. An anti-Semite is technically someone who hates Jews. But the term is a bit of a misnomer, for there are many other peoples that come from Shem besides the Jews. There are five sons of Shem mentioned (**Gen 10:22**). The main line concerns the third son: Arpachshad. This man eventually has a descendent named Shelah who then has Eber. **Eber** is an important name. Can you guess why?

Abram is a Hebrew. Eber is where the term “Hebrew” originates (see **Luke 3:35**). Thus, **vs. 21** begins the line of Shem by saying, “**To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born.**” Israel is not here, yet. But their ancestors are. This will

become important when Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

One other important name in this line we have mentioned. It is **Peleg**. Peleg means “to divide” and there is this idea that the earth was divided in his day. When you read the literature, you find several ideas here of what this might refer to. Some think it refers to a **geological catastrophe** that separated the land masses one from another. Some think it refers to **the division of the peoples** at Babel. Others think it refers to **the allotment and dividing of the land up**. There is no reason why #2 and #3 could not both be true (#1 is pretty farfetched to me).¹⁵ In the context of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, this is exactly what is going on. My guess is that Peleg was a contemporary of Nimrod and he was named either as a prophecy or a memorial of that great Tower event.

There are many other names throughout Genesis 10 that we could look at, but it seems better to me to return to a broader theme, one that the Bible itself gives us as it reflects on this chapter. Notice that the chapter ends with this idea that the sons of “**by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations**” spread abroad on the earth after the flood

¹⁵ For a summary see James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 416-17.

([Gen 10:31-32](#)). The next chapter will tell us why they spread abroad, but here it is enough simply to say that they do. And this becomes the source of the world's nations that we see even to this day.

So how does the Bible tell us to think about this table? This is actually a very, very important theme in the Bible. In fact, I dare say that the nation of Israel is but a footnote to this bigger theme. It is the theme of [God giving the nations over to darkness](#), so that he might one day shine light upon them, a light that will draw them to his holy mountain ([Isa 5](#)), and to a great feast thrown for them.

A Table for the Nations

Here, I want to return to the idea of seventy again. You see, the Bible takes this number of the divine council, the number of the Table of nations, the number of both since they were given to each other, and it repeats it in several important ways. These ways show the important ancient idea of “as in heaven, so on earth” that we find even in the Lord's Prayer (“on earth as it is in heaven”).

I've already mentioned the [seventy sons of Jacob](#). These sons go down into Egypt, and become slaves at the hands of the Pharaoh. Out of this, God sets his people free through a series of astounding miracles that leave the nation of Egypt in

ruins. After being set free, Israel then begins to wander in the wilderness with only Moses (humanly speaking) to guide them. But they soon begin bringing to him all of their legal complaints. 2,000,000 souls are not going to go long without getting themselves into trouble.

At this, Moses turns to his Gentile father-in-law, the man **Jethro** who tells him to appoint elders that will judge the cases of all but the most difficult, which will be brought to Moses himself. In this way, Jethro is having Moses set up **a kind of parallel to the divine council in heaven**, for it was the job, according to all of the ancients (for example, we saw this with Plato above), for the heavenly being to oversee justice in their lands. As Psalm 82 points out to them negatively, they judge unjustly, they show partiality to the wicked, they do not vindicate the weak and fatherless, they do not give justice to the afflicted and destitute, they do not rescue the weak and needy or deliver them from the hand of the wicked (**Ps 82:3-5**). Before someone says, **“How can a spiritual being be in charge of all that,”** just remember that these are the very things that time and again Yahweh says that he does for his people. He is the God of the fatherless, the widow, the poor, and the destitute. He gave laws to ensure their fair treatment,

prophets who would speak out for them, and priests who would heal their iniquities.

At any rate, these elders appointed by Moses end up taking a trip up Mt. Sinai with him. And it says that there were **seventy of them**, along with Aaron and his sons (**Ex 24:1**). These seventy elders of Israel end up having supper with the LORD of Hosts, eating and drinking with him **on the divine mountain**, as if invited into the heavenly divine council itself accompanied by myriads of angels (**Deut 33:2**). This is the very first signal in the Bible that the curse of Adam, who was kicked off Mt. Eden and the council (as we have seen), is going to be reversed by God. But that will take a while for God to undo.

Over time these seventy elders of Israel become offices in something called the **Sanhedrin**. The wiki gives the etymology properly saying that it is from a word meaning “**sitting together,**” hence ‘**assembly**’ or ‘**council**’). Rabbi Nassan describes “**the seventy judges who comprise the Sanhedrin.**” This is not an accident. The Sanhedrin, like their predecessors before them, were modeled—at the sovereign hand God himself—on the divine council in heaven itself.

Israel was to be a light to the nations. The nations were to come to her for salvation, even as the queen of Sheba came to

Solomon. However, Israel sinned greatly, and broke covenant and was sent, curiously, into exile for (curiously) **seventy years** in, also curiously, **Babylon**.

But then, prophecies start to happen. These prophecies are rooted back in **Deuteronomy 32:9**, the verse *after* those we have looked at already. It says, “**Yahweh’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.**” This is fascinating enough in light of Plato and the Egyptians who say that their own gods were “allotted” to them. But it is all the more fascinating when you understand that Israel was not among the nations in the Table of Nations. They did not exist.

The idea is that in Genesis 10, **God divided up all the earth**, gave the nations to the heavenly beings (created *elohim*), and **left nothing for himself**. Yet, Paul, again in Acts 17, says that God divided the peoples in this way, “**that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him**” (NAS) or “**feel their way toward him**” (ESV) and find him. Groping and feeling is the language of being in **darkness**. At the beginning of his ministry the Lord says, “**The people dwelling in darkness...**” (**Matt 4:16**). He’s talking about the nations, the *goyim*, those who have been given over to fallen heavenly beings, to the Prince of Darkness.

Later in Genesis, it is out of this darkness (Abram's father was himself a servant of other *elohim*; **Josh 24:2**) that the LORD takes Abram and creates from him, out of nothing, the nation of Israel. **Israel will be the LORD's inheritance**, his new creation. However, this is not enough. Israel was never the end, but only a means to an end. This is why God changes Abram's name to Abraham, "**Father of many nations**" (**Gen 17:4**). This name change has Genesis 10 in mind. The promise was not merely for one nation that would spring forth from Eve, but would be for all of them. This has always been the way of it, and it is why Genesis 1-11 is so absolutely vital to biblical theology, for it predates anything Jewish at all. It roots the good news in something that is for all peoples, **first for the Jew, then for the Gentiles**.

This is the way the promise would come. Psalm 2 speaks of the nations raging against the LORD and his Anointed. Thus, the LORD will scatter/dash them like a rod of iron (**Ps 2:9**). But the promise comes immediately after, "**I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill**" (the cosmic mountain of the divine council). "**You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession**" (**Ps 2:6-8**). "Inheritance" is the language of the table of nations, but it is

also the language of **Deut 32:9**. First, he inherits *Israel*. Now now, if he asks, he will inherit the nations! Or to put it another way, the sons of God will be outmaneuvered, because they will be disinherited.

Thus, Psalm 82 says to them, “**Like men you shall die, and fall like any prince**” (**vs. 7**). The prince of Persia, fallen. The prince of Greece, fallen. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. Bound for a thousand years to not longer deceive the nations. Finally at the end of all things to be thrown into the lake of fire itself to be punished for all eternity.

Yet, the promise comes, “**Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!**” (**Ps 82:8**). This is **Psalm 2:8** all over again. **The promise is again to Christ**. This begins to find fulfillment in the NT, when Jesus sends out his disciples 2 x 2 throughout the land of Israel. And it says, “**Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come**” (NAS). It is a plentiful harvest, but the laborers are few. They return to him with joy and say, “**Even the demons are subject to us in your name**” (**vs. 17**). Jesus says, “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on**

serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (18). The Kingdom of God has come near to you (vs. 9).

This is the divine reclamation project under way in its very first stage. It is a bringing of the nations to Christ through his kingdom through the seventy disciples who eventually replace both the Sanhedrin and the council in heaven. It begins with Israel. Then it goes beyond. This was the message of Paul to the Athenians in going back to Genesis 10. Christ is now reclaiming you, be reconciled to him. It is the message of the Revelator, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). It was the promise to Abraham, “You shall be the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4; Rom 4:17-18). It is the purpose of Acts, which as we will see next time, is the reversal of the Tower of Babel (see Acts 2:9-11). It is the message of 1 Peter who directs his letter to the elect exiles in the Dispersion (1 Pet 1:1). It is the message to you.

Jesus Christ has fulfilled the promises, and to him the Father is giving a multitude of peoples from among all the nations. No longer must they be held hostage to the devil, slaves of his will, natural born citizens of his kingdom,

though they all deserve it. Because God in his grace has sent the Son of the Most High to reclaim many, to call an elect multitude to a banquet, a great wedding feast. But though many are called, few are chosen.

Have you heard the call of the Master today? Does this story thrill your soul? God is very near you this moment ... as near as the preached word. For God is the Word of God. Trust in him to save you, for he is gracious in this day of salvation, and he will do it.