

God's Multi-Ethnic Family Plan (Implications for Missions, Marriage, Adoption, Church)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on March 27, 2011

www.goldcountrybaptist.org

Genesis 11:31 *Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.*³² *The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.*

12:1 *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a **great nation** [word is *ethne* in LXX, ethnic people], And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families [or nations] of the earth will be blessed."*

Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, repeats with "descendants". This is most significant turning point in OT. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say the whole point of the OT and whole plan of God till the end of time is included/introduced right in those words we just read. This is the hinge the whole Bible turns on, and God's plan of redemption is going to be revealed by.

From Genesis 12 till the end of Revelation, God is fulfilling what He revealed to this man who lived in what is modern day Iraq, but God calls him out of there to show him the land of what is modern day Israel and actually much bigger than its present borders, and the purpose of that nation was and is to bless all the nations on the planet through Abram and his seed physically and spiritually. Why did God choose to use the Jews, and why is He not through with the Jews? Because it's not just about a people or about Palestine, it is about a plan, a promise, a prophecy, to take people who were not a nation and to make them a nation, to take an Iraqi named Abram and to make him the father of future Israelites, to call out a people from idol worship to the worship of Yahweh, and to use this family of Abram and his future family to bless all the families of earth!

Galatians 3:8 says the gospel was preached to Abraham with these words "*in You all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*" Those words were the preaching of the gospel to Abraham about the blessing of the gospel, the blessing of the Messiah to come from his family and lineage in the future. God did not choose the Jews because God was exclusive or narrow or because He had a small plan for just one nation on a little strip of land in the Middle East for thousands of years until Jesus came. He from the very beginning had a global plan for ethnic descendants of Abraham to bless every ethnicity on earth, so people from every tribe and tongue and nation would become spiritual descendants of Abraham by believing in Jesus, that's the gospel in Genesis (Galatians 3) and that plan was to begin in OT times, and *it did begin in OT times.*

God spreads out nations in Genesis 10-11, as He commanded them to do in Genesis 9 after the flood, but it takes Babel and language-creation and separation by God Himself before man spreads out according to God's plan, being fruitful and multiplying and filling the whole earth, and it is then that God reveals His gospel plan for all those nations across the globe, to bless them through Abram with the type of blessing the NT ministry of Jesus begins with: "*Blessed*" towards repentant "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*"

Even in the OT the word “blessed” is explained as gospel blessing: Psalm 32 *“Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven ...”* In Gen 12:3 God has a plan for all families/people to receive this blessing. The last words of Jesus at the end of the gospel of Luke are *“all the things that were written about me in ... Moses ... **must be fulfilled** ... that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem”* (24:44, 47)

And it says He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures as all about Christ, including a plan for all peoples, starting in Moses (in Genesis), He opened their eyes to see what they hadn’t seen in the OT because of a Judaism exclusivism ethno-centrism (a danger for American Christians as well to miss God’s plan for His multi-ethnic family, but it is our purpose, too).

Jesus tells His Jewish disciples at the end of Matthew’s gospel: *“Make disciples of **all the nations**”* (all ethnicities, that phrase is right out of Genesis 12, same phrase). This was not a new mission for the Jews, we call it the Great Commission, but it is really a re-commission of what God called them to be and do in Genesis 12!

I pray that Jesus Himself will open our eyes to see His plan that starts with the writings of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy), that there are things concerning Christ in the whole OT from the very beginning, the foundation of the gospel and missions and marriage and church (a mystery the NT later reveals was the ultimate reality and reason for marriage to picture Christ and His church, but that wasn’t understood by OT saints, the Jew/Gentile bride of Christ).

I pray our hearts will be opened to see Christ here and His plan for all the nations through the nation He calls and creates in Abraham, through whom all the nations / families of the earth will be blessed. I pray that Christ will not only open our eyes to see things we’ve never seen before like He did at the end of Luke’s gospel, but that like it says there, our hearts would burn within us as well. May He reveal Himself and His plan, and may our worldview be changed, so that when we hear or watch the news about other nations, that we think about this message, and as we read the Bible we see it in this light, as we think about the history of Israel it is through these lenses, and as we think about our purpose in redemptive history and before the end of time, that we would think of these truths.

This has the potential to revolutionize the way we view missions and marriage and adoption and church, how we look at the news and our neighbors and our own nation. This should affect the way we think of people who are ethnically different from us or from different nations than us or speaking different languages than us or with different skin color than us or with a different religion than us.

When Jesus started in the beginning of the writings of Moses and opened their eyes to explain from the whole OT about Christ and the gospel for all nations, it was all there in their Scriptures already – what were some of the things He might have explained? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and all things and He created them to reproduce *“according to their kind.”* Diversity was part of His plan, from 2 of each creature would come so many diverse and wonderful variations, shades of color, shapes, sizes, all species reflecting the creativity and manifold multi-colored multi-faceted rainbow-like wisdom of God, as Paul calls it in Eph. 3, and for man God always had a multi-national multi-ethnic family plan.

Jesus may have brought up how Gen 1 says all of mankind was created in the image of God, and all are descended from Adam and the fact that he later named his wife Eve because she would be the mother of all living (we're all sons of Adam, daughters of Eve). He may have talked about how when God married Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 that was really a mystery picturing Christ and His people and His relationship to them, and the very word for "one" there (the marital oneness and unity) was the same word used for God's very nature in their classic statement of faith (*shema* in Dt. 6:4, a oneness that can include more than one person as in the Trinity and for us, male or female/Jew or Gentile, we are to be all one in Christ the Messiah who says "*therefore, go make disciples of all nations*")

I have no doubt He spent time in Genesis 3 which speaks of man's fall into sin, which is why it was necessary for a Savior to come, and in that chapter the coming Christ is first promised (Gen 3:15). And what a lot of people don't realize is that the lists of names in Genesis 4-5 and 10-11 have much to do with the Messiah to come and also all the nations to be blessed through Abram's seed/nation.

God commands 2x in Genesis 9 to Noah and his sons after the flood "multiply / fill the earth / spread out over the earth" and we need to see that is because God has a gospel plan for all the diverse and different and distant descendants of Noah and his 3 boys, and He's going to use a Chaldean guy from Ur (Iraq), turning a pagan into a people whose purpose is to bless the planet! God calls and creates a nation (Israel) to bless all nations on earth with the gospel

Jesus may have reminded the disciples that all nations come from one man/race, because of their racism to Samaritans (who only had partial Jewish blood) and He may have reminded them their "Father Abraham" at the end of Genesis 11 had no Jewish blood technically (there were no Jews yet), he was 100% Chaldean. God calls and creates a new ethnic group from Abram the Iraqi.

This is what the same Lord inspired Paul to say in Acts 17:26 to some from Greek nations: The Lord "***made from one man [KJV "blood," speaking of Adam] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,***"²⁷ ***that they would seek God ...***

Please don't miss the God-inspired God-intended point as to why God told Adam and Eve and Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and to spread over the earth. God has a plan for nations. God determined where the nations would go after Babel, and the times they would live, the tongues they would speak, the tribes that would develop, all of this was His plan for all nations to seek Him. He chose Abram and his seed to fulfill this plan in Genesis and our Lord undoubtedly explained this to the Jews on that Emmaus road.

We know this was our Lord's own perspective on the nations and calling of Abram in Gen 12 because the Lord inspired Paul to write:

"ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." ... was "*the gospel preached to Abraham*" about the Gentile nations being saved, Gal. 3:8 says and v. 14 says a purpose of redemption is "*that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles*" / nations

So don't think people scattering to fill the earth after Babel was a judgment – it was God's blessing also. Both in Gen 1 and Gen 9 it says *God blessed them and said, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth*. God's image multiplying and filling the earth and forming nations was not a curse, it was God's command, and it was His grace that intervenes at the Tower of Babel despite man's sin in rebellion.

God sets His rainbow in the sky in Gen 9 after the flood as a multi-colored reminder of His multi-faceted grace for the whole human race, and He sends people out in Gen 10-11 with a plan to bring back together every color, country, culture to one day worship the Lamb who was slain with blood just as red and real as all of us! It is His plan to reunite a diversity of mankind in unity around Christ. This is not a new NT plan, it's God's OT multi-ethnic family plan!

Gen 12 is not the first time families/nations are mentioned. Look at 10:5: "*From these [Noah's sons, v. 1] the coastlands of the nations were separated into their **lands**, every one **according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.***"

... 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.***

Gen 12:3 "... ***all the nations/families of the earth will be blessed***"

What nations/families/peoples were Abram to be a blessing to? In context, obviously it's all the ones just mentioned in Genesis 10. I think Jesus would have explained to the disciples on the road to Emmaus much about the nations in Genesis 10-12 because that's the culmination of what Luke's gospel says He said, beginning in Gen/Moses, the plan is Christ to be proclaimed among *all nations!*

So in Genesis 10, this is not just a boring list of who begat who, this is not just a list of names, these are nations God is going to bless as they come worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! This is not just an old family tree, this chapter is our family tree, and it's about God's plan to enfold some from every family of the earth into the family of faith by marriage, by missions, by Messiah. So let's look at some of the names and nations in Gen 10 and let's test what I've said against the OT. I haven't seen or read anybody really bring this out by actually tracing out specific nations in Gen 10 to see how God fulfilled His redemptive promise to Abram to bless all the nations, but this study was a blessing to me, a Gentile thousands of years later, and I hope it will bless you tonight as well

In v. 2, the 3rd name mentioned is Madai. Scholars say he fathered the Medes (alternate spelling) and Persian peoples. Did God use any Jews to be light and blessing to them in OT times? Yes. God blessed them thru Daniel's relationship to 2 Persian kings (Cyrus, Darius), Nehemiah's relationship to another King Artaxerxes, and an even closer relationship to a 3rd Persian King Ahasuerus through a young Jewish girl whose name was...? Esther. God blesses the nation even physically and financially through Jewish influence:

Esther 10:3 (last verse in the book): *Second only in power to King Ahasuerus was Mordecai **the Jew** ... who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.*

The people of Israel were a light to the Persians and some believe lasting fruit of the Hebrew influence was the fact that Magi who may have been from this region centuries later still are studying Hebrew Scriptures and they come to worship the King of the Jews

You could trace even through Genesis the impact Abram had on numerous kings who were in contact with him, for better or worse, blessing or curse, depending on how they treated Abram. Pharaohs and kings interact with Abram, including Melchizedek, King of Salem, who blesses Abram in fulfillment of Gen 12:2 and worships the true most high God with him, blessed with saving relationship.

We see later in Genesis Abram's great-grandson Joseph is a Jew in Egypt who God uses to bless that nation and is given a prominent role, and other nations are blessed who bless Abram's descendants. But the most important blessing in the Gen 12 promise is spiritual.

Let's keep going past Madai in Gen 10:2 to the next few names:

JAVAN – Became father of people of Greece

TUBAL/MESHECH – moved North, settled in modern Russia

Notice v. 4 the name TARSHISH – (Spain) – Paul goes in Rom 15

v. 4 KITTIM – also translated Cyprus – other Jews go there in Acts

Note a name at the end of v. 6 PUT – east Africa (Libya today). In Acts 2, Jews are used to reach people from Libya with the gospel.

God has a plan for each of these revealed in the OT in Isaiah 66:

¹⁰ *“Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; Be exceedingly glad with her ... ¹² For thus says the LORD, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, **And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream ...***

¹⁸ *“... **the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.** ¹⁹ “I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them [a remnant of believing Israel] **to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, 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.***

The end of v. 6 mentions Canaan, and v. 15-20 describe Canaanites who spread out. It's no surprise that there are more verses in this chapter about the Canaanites than any other because Canaanites were very familiar to the OT original audience reading this for the first time. Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible, conservative scholars traditionally say, before Israel enters the land of Canaan under Joshua. Now think about the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, in relation to Gen 10 and God's promise to bless nations through them in Gen 12:3. Can you think of any of them who came to saving faith in Yahweh through Israel's influence shortly after?

How about a shady lady from Jericho? 10:19 also mentions areas of Sodom and Gomorrah? Anybody in OT times saved from that part of the world? ... How about one who marries Rahab's son? Ruth is from that part of the world and becomes a true believer and both of those ladies are celebrated in the NT, Rahab in James/Heb.

The first page of the NT, Matthew 1 mentions both of those ladies, after introducing Jesus in the first verse as “son of Abraham” (fulfillment of Gen 12) and then the very end of Matthew’s gospel uses the same phrase “all nations” from the Gen 12 promise to Abraham, re-commissioning Jews to make disciples of all nations. Matthew’s genealogy only goes back to Abraham to make a point.

The very first page of the NT is showing how God in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham to bless all families of the earth, God has been doing it all along, and there are at least 3 Canaanites in the family tree of Jesus who had converted and been saved, and mixtures of other ethnicities in the Lord’s multi-ethnic family tree

I want us to think in terms of what Jesus may have been explaining to His Jewish disciples on that road to Emmaus right before giving them the Great Commission at the end of Matthew’s gospel. Did they see any people groups from Gen 10 come to faith in Jesus as He was with His Jewish disciples? They did. A Canaanite woman comes to Jesus in Matthew 15 and Jesus tells her not only does she have faith, but her faith is great (His disciples in contrast “little”).

As Jesus walked them through the OT showing how it all pointed to Him in a scarlet thread running through the whole Bible, I have no doubt that Rahab the Canaanite was part of what He spoke of and had been doing all along, this plan revealed back in Genesis.

Gen 10:10 mentions Babel or Babylon for the first time? Any Jew used by God to bring a Babylonian to faith? Yes. Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar, who writes all of Daniel 4, I believe he’s the only non-Jew to write a chapter in Hebrew Scripture, as his testimony. It was part judgment that Israel is sent to Babylon, but also part of God’s plan of grace, to still fulfill Gen 12:3 with Israel in captivity

Israel’s sin never cancelled out God’s covenant grace with Abram or His plan to bring other nations to salvation blessing thru them. Look at Gen 10:11, it mentions nations of Assyria and Nineveh. We don’t wait till NT times to have a missionary go to Nineveh, do we? It’s in the OT? Who’s the OT missionary to Nineveh? Jonah. A Jew Jonah, an originally reluctant racist becomes a missionary God uses to fulfill Gen 12:3 blessing on one of “all nations” from Gen 10, as the nation repents for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Lk 24)

Walt Kaiser, in his book *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, writes (p. 50): ‘as Jonah was a preacher of righteousness in the capital of Nineveh, so Elisha and the company of the prophets likewise delivered the message of the saving grace of God to Syria as well [2 Kings 8, Naaman]. In fact, Jesus cites this same line of thought in his Nazareth sermon in Luke 4.’ (Jesus adds in Lk 4 Elijah was sent to a Gentile widow who came to believe in the God of Israel and experienced His special grace). I want to close looking at just 2 more names/nations in Gen 10:6:

⁶ *The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim [ESV “Egypt”] ...*

These are names and nations of Africa. The name “Cush” is mentioned first, and repeated in v. 7 and v. 8. It appears over 60x in the Bible as the name of this place Cush or the Cushite people, a great black African nation, settling in the area of modern Sudan.

The Cushites were very prevalent and prominent in Egypt. In fact, some of the Pharaohs were Cushite and were black-skinned, and there was a mixed multitude of them in Egypt in the day of Moses.

The original readers of Genesis would have had special interest in this verse, because they would have grown up in Egypt around people from Cush and other nations mentioned in Gen 10. And as they kept reading in Genesis 46 (you can turn there) they would read that their own family tree by God's design included Egyptian blood by marriage to Joseph, and also that 2 of Israel's tribes were half-African. This is very significant in light of Gen 10, and 12:3!

Genesis 46:1 *So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.* ² *God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."* ³ *He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.* [repetition of Genesis 12 promise]

48:1 *Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.* [these were from marriage to Asenath, whose father was a priest from On/Heliopolis, i.e., lower Egypt, in African, first-fruit of Gen 10:6 receiving Gen 12:3 family blessing] ² *When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed.* ³ *Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.'* ⁵ *"Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.*

These half-African sons Israel treats as his very own firstborn sons. These sons are adopted into Israel's family as full heirs of the covenant promises to Abraham, and become full part of Israel. In fact, Ephraim becomes a tribe who's often synonymous with Israel and when Revelation lists the tribes of Israel, Manasseh is there. God is bringing the blessing of Abram on these from other nations and families of the earth in this Gen 12:3 multi-ethnic family.

¹⁵ *He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, ¹⁶ The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." ... ²⁰ He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'*

Skip forward to Exodus 12 for a moment, and I want you to see something else many haven't noticed, that was part of God's plan in bringing Israel into Egypt then out, as part of Gen 12:3 blessing. In Exodus 12:37, the Exodus, there were other non-Jewish people that also were a part of the Exodus along with the sons of Israel.

Exodus 12:37 Now **the sons of Israel** journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. ³⁸ **A mixed multitude also went up with them ...**

The word “multitude” makes clear it wasn’t just a few people, and the term “mixed” in contrast to “sons of Israel,” the commentators agree, means there were a good number of non-Jews, other ethnic groups. There were Egyptians, we read earlier in the book, who did fear Yahweh, and came to worship, and the fact that it doesn’t just say “believing Egyptians” in v. 38 indicates other people groups in Egypt who weren’t Jewish also part of the Exodus. We know that many foreigners of other nations were in Egypt at that time, and in this chapter when the Passover was instituted, it includes laws for foreigners to be a part, they just had to be converted/circumcised.

Cush was a prominent foreign nation in Egypt, and Numbers 12 indicates black Africans came along with Jews, and became part of the makeup of the Jewish people. There were probably other ethnic groups, all part of God’s plan to reach all nations with the blessing of Gen 12:3 and part of God’s plan in bringing Israel to Egypt so that He can bring them out with Israel to worship Him together.

The book of Isaiah has prophecies against many of the nations that had their origin in Gen 10, but after 39 chapters of judgment, chapters 40-55 focus on Israel’s role of grace to those nations. Isaiah 42:6 *“I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As **a light to the nations**”*

The Jews understood that as a command for missions to Gentiles. Acts 13:46 *Paul and Barnabas spoke [to the Jews on the Sabbath] “... we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ **“For so the Lord has commanded us, I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.”**”* ⁴⁸ *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.*

In our next study I want you to see how many Arabs and people in nations we consider Muslim today were saved in OT times, and how they are and were precious to God as well as the Jews.