

Confused And Scattered

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. As Treg said, I'm Leland. I'm one of the pastors at East! Cooper Baptist Church in Mount Pleasant. Really a joy to share the word with you this morning.

! A little bit about me. As Treg said, my wife and most of my kids are here. You will probably! hear the littlest one at some point during the service, and that's okay. And I got to know your pastor, Jonathan, through our shared involvement in the Charles Simeon Trust, which is a workshop focused on biblical exposition. So I love Jonathan's commitment to biblical preaching. And I'm really glad this morning to continue the sermon series in Genesis.

If you'd open your Bibles to Genesis 10, I'll have you stand in just a moment to read the word. As we get there, I want to notice that sometimes in the Old Testament, we encounter passages, if we're going to read them out loud, where we just have to choose to pronounce the names boldly. You know? No one knows better, so we're just going to pronounce boldly. Our passage this morning is about three-quarters names, and so I'm going to pronounce these boldly, and we're going to be here together. Second, it's a fairly long passage, so Genesis 10 all the way to Genesis 11, 26. And so I want to give you just a bit of context for this passage. So if you were here at a previous sermon on Genesis 9, Noah prophesied what was going to happen to his sons. I'll read that text at some point this morning. And Genesis 10 is really fleshing out Noah's prophecy about what was going to happen to his sons. So Shem, Japheth, and Ham, their children end up becoming different kinds of people spread throughout the earth.

And then at the end of our passage, we have a genealogy of Shem's descendants ending in Abraham. And as you'll see, you know, Abraham's the father of many nations. He's the person who gets God's promises. And right in the middle of these two passages, and all these names, is the Tower of Babel's story. And the main thing going on in this passage is the author is describing humanity's roots, the origins. Every person on the planet today finds their roots in Genesis 10 to 11. And so let's stand for the reading of God's word. And I will read this passage, and we will hear the Lord's voice in it.

Genesis 10, again, all the way to 11, 26. These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth, Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. Sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Riphth, and Torgamah.

[2 : 58] The sons of Javan, Elisha, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these, the coastland people spread in their lands, each with his own language by their clans in their nations. The sons of Ham, Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush, Seba, Havalial, Sabta, Rama, and Sabtica. The sons of Rama, Sheba, and Dedan. Cush fathered Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore, it is said, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Kalna, and the land of Shinar. From that land, he went into Assyria and built Nineveh. Rehoboth, Eir, Kalah, and Rezin between Nineveh and Kalah.

That is the great city. Egypt fathered Ludim, Anaman, Lehabim, Naflutim, Pathrushim, Kaluhim, from whom the Philistines came, and Kaphtorim. Canaan fathered Sidon, his firstborn, Heth, and the Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Ardivites, the Zemurites, and the Hamathites. Afterward, the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. 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, Adma, and Zeboim as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem, Alam, Ashur, Arpachad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram, Uz, Hol, Gether, and Mosh. Apartshad fathered Shela, and Shela fathered

Eber. To Eber were born two sons. The name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan fathered Almadad, Shelaf, Harzametheth, Zerah, Hadorim, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abamael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

The territory in which they lived extended from Meshah in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. These are the sons of Shem by their clans, their nations, their languages, and their lands. These are the clans of the son of Noah according to their genealogies and their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. Now the whole earth had one language and the same words, and as people migrated from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, come let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly, and they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar, and they said, come let us build ourselves a city and tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, behold they are one people and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they'll do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down there and confuse their language so they cannot understand one another's speech. So the Lord dispersed them from there over all the face of the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth, and from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of the earth.

These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was a hundred years old, he fathered a parkshad two years after the flood, and Shem lived after he fathered a parkshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters. When a parkshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shela, and a parkshad lived after he fathered Shela 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shela had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber, and Shela lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg, and Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters. When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu, and Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters. When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Sareg, and Reu lived after he fathered Sareg 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

[7 : 47] When Sareg had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. And Sareg lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters. When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah.

And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters. When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

You guys can be seated. I'll pray real quick. Father, we just ask that you would open our eyes to see wonderful things in your word this morning. It's that in Christ's name. Amen. I've come to the conclusion that nearly every family has someone a bit obsessed with ancestry or genealogy. On my side of the family, it's my aunt. She's the Ancestry.com guru. On my wife's side of the family, it's her sister-in-law. She has her ancestry traced all the way back to 1500s England. We even have a relatively famous ancestor, Sir Thomas More, who was actually martyred during the English Reformation. I've never been one of those people super interested in genealogy or ancestry. My grandmother, who is now 99, has been telling me all sorts of really interesting things about our family. In fact, I learned from her recently that she's a part of the daughter to the American Revolution. That means that she and therefore I are direct descendants of someone who fought in the American Revolution. More than that, I learned from her recently that the whole reason her kin came to America was because they were French Huguenots, Protestants in France during the Reformation who were persecuted. And so all of a sudden, even though I'm not the genealogy guy, these roots, the roots of my family start to fascinate me. I have relatives involved in these big moments in history. It's encouraging. There's been sacrifice and perseverance and all sorts of things.

[9 : 49] I've got some good blood in my roots. But of course, it's usually wise to not look too closely at the family tree. For every family hero, there's at least one family villain. And just on a more real note, I mean, we can see in our own families just people who've had destructive behaviors and cause things that are really hard.

But even knowledge of unfortunate family roots can be helpful to us. If great ancestors inspire us, the bad ones warn us. If we've seen the impact of generational sin, if we've seen how these behaviors have been lived out, you know, we can be forewarned and forearmed against them. We can recognize our own proclivities. And one of the main concerns of our passage today in Genesis 10 to 11 is it tells the story of the roots of every human being presently living on the earth. All of us in here descend from the sons of Noah. And this is, again, as I was reading it, you probably felt that this is kind of an obscure passage. But it's actually been carefully arranged to help us recognize some of humanity's roots. And so what I want to just try to convince you of this morning is if you're going to understand the world you live in, you have to understand your roots. If you're going to understand the world you live in, you have to understand your roots. And the three sections of our big passage describe three particular roots of humanity. So here's the first one. The first root in Genesis 10 is unity and division.

Humanity both comes from one family and is divided along different groups of people. So notice, these are the generations of the sons of Noah. It's where we begin. All the nations of the earth descend from Noah's family.

We are all of one blood. There, of course, are cultural differences. We feel those today. But we want to recognize just that I have more in common with a North Korean than I don't. Now, there's a lot that's different between the two of us, right? Heritage, blood, language, all those things, right? But all people descend from this one family. There's a unity in the family of the nations of the earth. So we all come from the same family, but it's not exactly a happy family. Leo Tolstoy hilariously began one of his best books with, all happy families are alike, and each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. And humanity comes from this one family. But it's not a big happy family. There is division in humanity. And again, Noah prophesied this division in Genesis 9, 26 to 28. He talked about how Shem was the one who had God, the Lord as his God, and how Japheth would have his tents expanded, and how Ham and Canaan would be their servants. And Genesis 10 works that out. It describes the divisions between the peoples of the earth. So first we see the sons of Japheth. That's verses 2 to 5.

[13 : 35] And Japheth consists of most of the people of the earth. So if you had a ESV study Bible or something and it had a picture, Japheth's sons would dominate the picture. They are the ones spreading out all over the earth. Indeed, Japheth's tents were enlarged like Noah predicted. They are the wider world, and by and large will be ignored throughout most of the Old Testament. They don't come into the biblical story at all. So Japheth's sons are really the wider world that ignores God and is not really involved and engaged in his plan. Among these various peoples are Magog. This is verse 2, the sons of Japheth. Magog's his second son. And what's really interesting is we never really hear about Magog or any of the other sons for a really long time. And then Magog comes back in Revelation describing this great rebellion against God and this attack on his people. So I think the idea here is the people of Japheth are a lot like the wider world. For most of human existence, the nations will walk in their own ways, do their own things, and at the end they will rise in rebellion against God and its ways. Next we see the sons of Ham and Canaan. These people predicted to serve Shem and Japheth.

And these are almost all Israel's direct enemies. So the people who are the sons of Ham would be variously the enemies or the oppressors of God's people. Notice here in verse 6 we have Egypt. Most of us know that God's people in Israel were oppressed by the Egyptians before the Exodus. We also see Babylon and Assyria, these two great world empires that will eventually attack and war against God's people. And notice that Ham's sons are mighty. Look at verses 8 to 9. Nimrod, great boy's name I guess, you know. Nimrod. Cushfather Nimrod, he was the first to become, first on earth to become a mighty man.

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. I don't think this is a good title for him. You know, God did not create humanity to make war and destroy things. And Nimrod is doing that though. And he establishes Babel, that city we'll see in a second in Genesis 11. He also establishes Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. But notice the whole point of this. We have two groups of people so far. The wider world neglects God and the enemies of God's people who will oppress and war against God's people. And then we have Shem, the son of Noah, who eventually will produce Abram and will eventually even produce our Lord Jesus Christ. And the one of whom Noah says is blessed. And what's really interesting about Shem's genealogy or whatever here in verses 21 to 30 is there's not really that much going on.

You don't have great big world empires here. You don't have Assyrian Babylon. You just got some names. You know, if you spread these out on the map, they'd have, they'd occupy this little tiny corner of the map. And yet, these are the line of God's people who are blessed. They're the hope of the world. And so again, notice that the root of humanity is division. And at the heart of that division is the majority of humanity either ignoring or opposing God. Our heritage, is largely one of rebellion, division, self-sufficiency. And these roots explain a lot about the world today. Think of the global conflicts we have. Russia and Ukraine. Israel and Hamas, right? It's like Ham and Japheth's sons can't get along. Like they've never been getting along. We have big, huge world empires today. Nations threatening the West. And we have God's people. You know, the gospel's going forward, but they're almost nowhere politically in power, right? We don't see big, huge things. We don't see the church ruling today. And it can be very discouraging to live in a world like that. And what's super helpful about Genesis 10 is it helps us recognize that this is how the world has always been. You know, Christians today are tempted to look around in alarm and say, oh my goodness, the world is burning down around us. People are walking away from God. We're going to lose. And the reality is, is that, is that this has been going on for all of human history.

Most nations for the history of humanity have ignored and walked away from God or opposed God's people. And more, more personally, you know, um, what might be even more disturbing to your faith is the number of people you meet in daily life who are quite content without Jesus. You know, we've, we've said a lot, and I don't know, uh, this is a church, but I remember hearing a lot in the church that, you know, God's put sort of like a God-shaped hole in people's hearts and like no one can really be happy without Jesus. And there's some truth to that, but come on down to South Mount Pleasant, guys, right? And see all of the wealthy, prosperous, content people who do not need Jesus. That can be hard to see people who like their lives seem great and prosperous and they're doing fine without Jesus.

[19:48] And we just want to recognize that that does not make our faith not true. That's what humanity's been doing since Genesis 10. Some humans are just better at it than others. And, and we just want to recognize that our faith is not true just because it works. It's true because it's true. Christ really did die and was raised from the grave. He really descended on high. And, and it's not just that Jesus works in my life. And that's why I believe. No, no, no. We believe because we have God's word and, and we have history.

Okay. So we have humanity divided. Um, we also have humanity rebellious and thwarted. So we have rebellion and being thwarted in our roots. Uh, in Genesis 10, we talked a lot about the divisions between humanity, but the nations were not always divided and spread. Um, in Genesis 11, the most famous story in this passage, it explains why we have the division we do. So at some point during Genesis 10, Babel happens. So all of the sons of Noah and all their clans at one point in time, they were all together in Babel, uh, doing their thing. And then eventually God thwarts their rebellion and spreads them across the earth. Um, but again, what, uh, the point of this account is to say that at our roots are deep rebellion against God and God thwarts us in our rebellion. So notice in verse one of chapter 11, the whole earth had one language in the same words, and they find a plane in the land of Shinar and they settle there. They are, uh, this is going against God's purposes. God wants humanity to spread throughout the world. He commanded Adam and Eve to go and be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And Noah's sons are saying, no way, that's scary. I don't want to do that. Let's all stick together. Right. Um, and in sticking together and refusing to do what God is calling them to do, you know, one disobedience leads to another. So all safe and settled, united, the people of the earth decide to build a monument to themselves.

Look at verse four. Come, let us build ourselves a city and tower with its top in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed all over the face of the earth.

Let me just notice a couple of things here at the heart of humanity's rebellion against God. So first notice how fear and unbelief are paired with pride and arrogance. The people of the earth have refused to do what God wills. They've refused to spread, spread out and fill the world. And in refusing to do what God, um, has commanded, they now think they're doing great. In their unbelief, they refuse to do what God says. And because they aren't going, because they're not doing what God is saying, they are convinced of their self-sufficiency. Um, you ever meet a child who likes to change the rules mid game.

So they always win. That's the people of Babel, right? They've changed the rules of what humanity should be doing. And in doing that, they say, wow, look how good we're doing. Look how great we

are.

[23 : 27] It's a great picture of the sort of pop spirituality that's out there today, right? Everybody's a spiritual person now, right? They just make the rules up themselves.

Notice second though, look how this rebellion is essentially humanity's declaration that they are their own gods. You know, building a tower like this, uh, in the ancient world would be sort of the equivalent today of us colonizing the stars, right? Uh, it'd be this pinnacle of human achievement. And they're saying, look what we're going to do for the sake of our own glory, right? For our own fame. We're going to build this tower into the heavens. We're going to get to where God is on our own. Um, and then, uh, and then finally see how this rebellion is not just personal. It is collective. You know, the founding fathers made America, made the governing structures to work slowly to make it hard to have rapid and fast change because they believed that collective insanity could come upon people. And that when collective insanity came upon people, we wanted a slow government. And what's, what you see in Babel is the collective insanity that comes upon an entire group of people. They all decide together to shake their hands at God. And just notice the particular brand of rebellion at the root of humanity here. Notice that in Babel, you don't get mentioned of immorality. You don't get it.

Mention of drunkenness or anger or rage. You don't have idolatry, worship of other gods. None of the things that we would say immediately, this is really bad behavior. That's not what the people of Babel are doing. You know, um, the sins of the flesh are very powerful and dangerous and everywhere today.

[25 : 33] They are not the truly great or damning sense. It is pride, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. The belief that we can do life without God.

Um, that, that we can be our own masters, the captains of our own souls. Just think about it. Our Lord Jesus, right? He had nothing but mercy for the repentant tax collectors and repentant prostitutes. People who were by all accounts wicked, right? Their wickedness helped them recognize their need. It's the people who were self-sufficient. It's Pharisees, scribes. They got Christ's condemnation.

And, um, I wonder this morning if deep down somewhere as a Christian with the right beliefs and the right morality, you might be building your own little tower to the heavens, to your own glory. You know, if much of your life consists of proving that you can do it, uh, if you live so that others will approve of you and see how great you are, you know, you're right back in Babel.

Pride and arrogance are, as C.S. Lewis said, the anti-God state of heart. And these sins of heart are really insidious, but they have to be dealt with. We can't live in them.

Now, notice though, God in his mercy refuses to allow humanity to succeed. Uh, the language in Genesis is, is intentionally ironic. So, uh, they want to build a tower that goes up to the heavens and it says the Lord came down to view the tower. Doesn't mean that God didn't already see it and see everyone there. It meant that, hey, the tower is so puny that God has to come down and see it. Um, but, um, but notice, uh, as the people of the earth say they're going to come and build themselves a tower, God says, come, let us go down and confuse their language. God in his mercy thwarts humanity's schemes to get them back on track. So he does so by frustrating, confusing their language. The brutality of learning a foreign language begins in Genesis 11. But, uh, but notice, um, it's difficult today as we would say that the, the multitude of languages and the cultural divisions we all experience just recognize that when humanity was united, when there was this sort of utopia, right? Everyone on the same page, everyone, all the, all the same language, they took that and used it in rebellion. As difficult as being dispersed and divided might be, right? It's actually a mercy of God. Um, so notice, uh, in verse nine, after the Lord thwarts God's, uh, after he thwarts the people of Babel, he disperses them all over the face of the earth. And God is still at work today, thwarting humanity's plans at rebellion. He does so in our own lives, of course, individually. Um, but notice that the focus here is on national, cultural, universal thwarting of humanity.

[29 : 11] Nations and cultures experience futility and division in part to humble them. If every nation just succeeded over and over and over and over and over and over again, it will result in pride. And, uh, this, the idea that God would thwart nations and cultures is kind of a tough pill to swallow if you live in the greatest nation on earth.

Even saying it that way as an American makes me a bit nervous. I'm a Babylonian, you know, but, um, but just, it's very easy to look out there today and to be real discouraged at the division in our day, the, the, all the ineffectiveness, the seeming decline of our country. And, uh, as an American, I

am very discouraged and very concerned. As a Christian, I'm actually kind of hopeful, right? Maybe God on high is thwarting our cultural national plans to bring humility and revival.

That's my prayer anyways. So, uh, the people of the earth are divided. They are actually united in their rebellion against God and their thwart, thwarting. But, uh, at the final section of our passage, we see our roots are hope. There is hope for humanity. Uh, God is not just thwarting humanity's rebellion.

He is providing and preserving the line of Abraham, who would be a blessing to the nations. Uh, just briefly turn back with me to Genesis 9, 26 to 27. I've referenced this passage a couple times already, but just notice this is Noah's prophecy that covers so much of human history.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem and let Canaan be his servant.

[31 : 18] So just notice a couple things. Shem's the only son of Noah, of whom it said that God is his God. God, the other brothers do not have the Lord as their God. And Japheth represents the wider world, but we would come to be called the Gentiles out there. And so, but notice though, that in verse 27, it says, may God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem. Uh, prefigured here is the idea that all the nations of the earth eventually would become blessed through Shem's line.

That eventually Japheth running out there doing his own thing. Eventually there'd be a day when he gets to come and dwell with God's people, be a part of God's people. Um, and, and so in preserving Shem's line, God is providing hope for this rebellious, divided humanity.

And, uh, that's the point of Genesis 11 verses 10 to 26, this genealogy. Um, this, these are, these are notoriously difficult passages to sort of preach on, but just notice a couple of things going on here. Uh, so first we get from Shem to Abram. Uh, the rest of Genesis helps us recognize that Abram is the whole point of this, that we're getting to Abraham. He's going to be the father of many nations. God's going to promise him that in you, all the nations will be blessed. Abraham is basically the model prefiguration of a Christian. Romans four says he's the man of faith who believes God is counted to him as righteous. He's a really important dude. Uh, he and his line will be the hope of the world. Um, but now he's just Abram and he literally gets on the scene in the very last verse.

Um, all of this action of God and hope hasn't appeared yet. You just have hundreds of years where the only thing going on is people are having babies and God is keeping them alive.

That's it. You know, there, there's the, what hope looks like in Genesis 11 is God is just keeping this family alive. There's no word from God. There's no action of God. There's no miracles.

[33 : 49] He's just keeping these people alive. And notice, uh, people are starting to be less strong. Death is starting to reign. Uh, Shem lives about 600 years. By the time we get to Nahor in verse 25, he only lives 119 years. So humanity's strength is fading here. God's preserving this line in the midst of humanity's strength. Just notice with me, the silence of God for centuries in Genesis 11.

After Babel, the whole world is spreading abroad, ignoring God, rebelling against God. The Babylonians and Assyrians are developing these technologies and these massive, uh, future empires. People are dying faster. Hundreds of years pass and there's no word from God. Just a quiet perseverance of one family. This is not the only time God's done this. Uh, think of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus predicted by the prophets, promised hope of the world, the offspring of Abraham, David's true son, who is going to rule the world in righteousness. And then 500 years of silence.

God's people just waited. And then out of nowhere, Christ is born of a virgin. All of God's promises are fulfilled in ways above and beyond anyone could imagine. Um, and just consider our place this morning as believers in Jesus. We are the people of Shem's line. We're likely the Gentiles who've been included in his tent through our Lord Jesus. We've been promised that God is our God. We've been told that with him, we will reign and rule forever and ever. And yet much of our lives will be waiting in silence.

Maybe there'll be times we feel like we're living in the book of Acts. Maybe there'll be times we feel like we're living in Genesis 11. And that is the portion and the part of God's people. We live by faith. We trust. We wait. We know that God is faithful to fulfill his promises. And so we're content. As the wide world ignores God, as there's division in humanity, as there's rebellion, we are content to wait for God to fulfill all of his promises for us. Let's live and love and persevere in that hope.

[36 : 42] Let's pray. Father in heaven, we do, uh, just plead that you would have mercy upon us.

Thank you for just how you persevere, you preserve your people and you keep us. And we just ask the Lord to give us faith as we, as we, as we, as we look at the wider world, as we see, um, all sorts of discouraging things. Would you please Lord help us to look to you and trust you and see you. Would you give us faith and endurance? I pray. In Christ's name. Amen.
Amen.