

GENESIS 10:6-20

(THE TABLE OF NATIONS, PART 2: THE SONS OF HAM)

When I first started typing the sermon we did last week, it was while a friend was in the hospital. She emailed me with the times she'd be in her room so that I could visit and I emailed back and said,

"I'm starting the sermon on Genesis 10 today and I honestly don't know if I'll be able to come by to visit. There are a lot of names, but not a lot of other information. I think it's going to take forever to get through this chapter with an entire sermon."

What I thought would be an uneventful sermon covering the entire chapter, turned into being last week's sermon on five verses. And I left out so much that I can't believe the Lord would be happy with the presentation unless I go revisit those verses again someday.

I feel like I committed a crime by passing through them so quickly. And if I stick to the schedule I've planned, we will be doing the line of Ham today and the line of Shem next week and then moving on. We're missing so much as we zip along.

Were we to really dig into Chapter 10, we could probably go on for weeks. But move on we will and I pray that you will forgive me in glory when you see how much we've missed in these sermons.

Introduction: The line of Ham, Noah's youngest son, has been the subject of an immense amount of abuse and people have tried to justify slavery based on Noah's curse of this line. The African people descend from Ham and past scholars used this logic to account for why it was acceptable to own slaves from there.

But the curse was one of servant hood, not abusive slavery. Overall, Ham is the great ignored figure of Noah's blessing and the people groups who make up the sons of Ham remain relatively outside of the main scope of the world's attention, despite being the talent behind many amazing inventions and achievements.

Text Verse: After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9, 10

Precious souls from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues will stand before the throne of God and worship. Let's remember that as we arrogantly look down on our fellow man and...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Curse of Canaan

²⁵ "Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren."

²⁶ And he said:
"Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant." Gen 9:25-27

Ham, if you remember, did a reprehensible and offensive thing to Noah. But God had already blessed Ham, and so instead of cursing his youngest son he turned and cursed his youngest son's youngest son. This curse symbolically covers the entire line of Ham in the Bible, but it is especially directed at the line of Canaan.

⁶**The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.**

More space is used in Chapter 10 to describe the line of Ham than either of the other brothers, Shem or Japheth. For this reason, it's important to

know who these people became and how they affect both God's people in the Bible and future prophecy.

Ham means "passionate" or "hot" but it can also mean "burnt" or "dark." Both of these descriptions perfectly fit the people who descended from him. Most of the darker people of the world including the Australoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid peoples descend from him. However, other dark groups of people are found in both the lines of Shem and Japheth.

The first of Ham's sons who is listed is Cush. His name means "black" and today Cush is known as Ethiopia. The people of Cush were spread out as far as Arabia too. Moses' wife was called a Cushite or an Ethiopian even though she was from Midian and so the two people were mixed by that time.

The second son listed is Mizraim which means "double straits" and they became the people of Egypt, both in upper and lower Egypt. After him, Put is listed. His name means "a bow" and we've seen them rise onto the world stage once again in the past months due to the war in Libya.

The Libyans come from Put along with other North African groups such as those in Cyrene, Tunisia, the Berbers, Somalians, Sudanese, etc. For the most part, they've been a troublesome group of people to the world in many ways and the name "a bow" is most fitting for their warlike attitude.

⁷The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Here, we have five sons of Cush listed. In the next verse we'll see another. They're divided up and named based on their importance to the story of the Bible. Out of the five sons listed in this verse, only one has the names of his sons listed too – Raamah. His sons are Sheba and Dedan.

Once again, these are listed because they are relevant to the biblical story and how they will interact with God's people. There may have been lots of others born to these sons of Ham, but only these are listed because of that.

These sons and grandsons spread all around the borders of Israel. They go from North Africa, around Arabia, and as far as the area of Iran today.

In a beautiful example of God's faithfulness to the line of Cush we read in the book of Jeremiah, about one of his descendants, an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebed-Melech, who saved Jeremiah's life by getting him out of a dungeon full of mud.

It was so bad that Jeremiah had actually sunk into the mud, so this eunuch went to the king to get permission to pull him out. In order to get him up, they had to put worn out clothes and rags under his armpit and it took thirty men to pull on the ropes.

Because of what he did, in the next chapter, God remembered Ebed-Melech during the horrible siege and eventual overthrow of Jerusalem –

“Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you. ¹⁷ But I will deliver you in that day,” says the LORD, “and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid. ¹⁸ For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me,” says the LORD.’”

And you might remember last week that I mentioned that the very first descendant of Ham to receive Jesus in the book of Acts was also from the line of Cush. He was the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts chapter 8 who worked for the Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians.

⁸ Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth.

⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”

Along with his other sons, Cush begot Nimrod. This is an enigmatic figure mentioned only a couple times in the Bible and his name means “we shall rebel” and comes from the word *marad* which specifically means to rebel.

The word *marad* is used in three ways – either rebelling against God, rebelling against a king’s authority, or in one instance to rebel against the light. It is Job who speaks of it in the last way and it’s possible he was thinking of Nimrod and his descendants and their spiritual rebellion against God –

¹³ “There are those who rebel against the light;
They do not know its ways
Nor abide in its paths.

¹⁴ The murderer rises with the light;
He kills the poor and needy;
And in the night he is like a thief.

¹⁵ The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me’;
And he disguises *his* face.

¹⁶ In the dark they break into houses
Which they marked for themselves in the daytime;
They do not know the light.” -Job 24:13-17

The Bible says Nimrod, “began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.” He is the first active figure mentioned of all of the Noah’s grandsons. Up to this point, we’ve only had names and places mentioned, but now we get real details on an individual.

There are two general ideas about what being a “mighty hunter” means. The first is that he hunted animals like we do today and that he cleared the land of them in order to establish a place that was suitable to live in... not likely.

The second, and more probable idea, is that he became a leader and gathered people under his command in order to make himself a ruler of the area he would settle. He was a mighty hunter before, or literally, in the face of the Lord.

This certainly means that he rebelled against the Lord and against spiritual authority and this is the picture that the Bible sets for him. Just like Cain before the flood, he has established a line separate from God and has gone into rebellion against Him.

¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah,

¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

¹³ Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,

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

Nimrod was a mighty hunter, but he was also a mighty builder, and a mighty leader. Like Cain who established the first recorded city and culture, it is Nimrod who follows this same path after the flood. The line of Cain, though wiped out in the flood, is symbolically alive and kicking in this guy, Nimrod.

There are several ancient writings that speak of Nimrod. One of them says, "He was mighty in hunting... and in sin before God, for he was a hunter of the children of men in their languages; and he said unto them, 'Depart from the religion of Shem, and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod.'"

Another writing says: "From the foundation of the world none was ever found like Nimrod, powerful in hunting, and in rebellions against the Lord."

These writings aren't biblical, they both show us that the belief from ages past that Nimrod fought against the true faith revealed in nature and by his fathers before him.

The word which is used for "hunter" signifies prey. It is used when talking about hunting men by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. And it's likely then that he acquired power and used it in tyrannical oppression to establish the first kingdom after the flood.

So what is it about Nimrod that makes the list of people suddenly stop and highlight him? It's not only because of who he was, but more importantly what he did and the cities he founded. His rebellion against God established the land of wickedness which will come into play throughout the rest of the Bible.

From this point on, even to Revelation, there will be two cities of major importance which reflect two concepts. The first is Jerusalem, the city of peace and wholeness. It is the city where God dwells and righteousness reigns.

The other is Babylon, which means “confusion.” It is in Shinar and is the city in spiritual opposition to God. It is where evil and wickedness reigns. Babylon is east of Jerusalem. When man was sent out of Eden and away from God’s presence it was to the east.

When the Israelites were in fellowship, or at peace with God, they possessed the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, but when they were disobedient, they were cast out of the land to the east, to Babylon in the land of Shinar.

But Babylon isn’t just a place; it is also a concept of spiritual rebellion against God. The second exile of the Jews was by the Romans. In his first letter, Peter writes from Rome, but says this –

She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does* Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

God is telling us in His word that the Babylon of the future, the one mentioned as the great Harlot in the book of Revelation will be centered in Rome, right where the Vatican now stands. At some point, probably after the rapture, the city of Rome will become the leader of all spiritual opposition to God and direct the forces of evil against Jerusalem, the city of Peace.

This will certainly include an alliance with the people who live in the actual plain of Shinar today, the muslims. This merging of the world’s apostate religions will come against God’s people, Israel, in an attempt to destroy them from the earth.

II. A Servant of Servants He Shall Be

- ¹⁵ Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth;
¹⁶ the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite;
¹⁷ the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite;
¹⁸ the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.**

I said earlier that more space is used in Chapter 10 to describe the line of Ham than either of the other brothers, Shem or Japheth. And of all of the sons of Ham, more space is used to describe the Canaanites than any of Ham's other sons.

This is because they settled in the lands directly in and around where Israel is and so they will have the greatest effect on the people of God. Canaan means "merchant" or "servant."

Eleven groups of people descend from Canaan. Remember, it is Canaan who received the curse of servitude from Noah and these are the accursed descendants of him. Despite this, we see later in the Bible that grace is found even towards some of these people.

Knowing who these people are helps us to understand the avenues the Bible travels as we read through it. To neglect this chapter and these particular names leaves us misunderstanding a lot of what God has done through the people of the world and so we pass over them too quickly at our own loss.

Three examples from the Old Testament of people from the line of Canaan who found the Lord's grace are recorded in the women who would be named in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew chapter 1.

Of the five women mentioned in that genealogy, only Mary is an Israelite. Ruth was from Moab which was from the line of Shem, and the three others are from the line of Canaan.

The first is Tamar who was the daughter-in-law of Judah and who fathered his sons Perez and Zerah. Despite the scandal, Judah said she was more righteous than he was in the affair that occurred.

The second is Rahab the harlot of Jericho who hid the spies of Israel and was brought into the people of Israel when she married Salmon. The two of them would have a son named Boaz who would become the great grandfather of King David.

And the third comes from the account of David and Bathsheba. Bathsheba was married to Uriah the Hittite, one of the sons of Heth, who was the second son of Canaan. Despite the what occurred, God's grace was bestowed on Bathsheba and she was brought from this line into the line of Shem.

In the New Testament, an example comes from Matthew 15:21-28 –

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The grace of the Lord Jesus was given to a woman from the line of Ham and from the children of Canaan because she was a woman of great faith. And I brought up Simon of Cyrene last week. He was the one who carried Jesus' cross. Here is the account –

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. ²² And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. – Mark 15:21-22

And it's very likely that this son of Canaan not only served Jesus, but became a servant of Jesus. In Paul's closing comments to the Romans, he writes this – "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." It is believed that the Rufus mentioned here is the same Rufus who was the son of Simon who carried the cross.

Simon then was the ultimate fulfillment of Noah's words of curse – "a servant of servants you shall be." Jesus, the Suffering Servant, was served by this son of Canaan who carried His cross for Him, even to Golgotha where all curses find their termination.

And whenever I read this account, I remember what happened between Peter and Jesus on the night He was betrayed –

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

³⁷ Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

³⁸ Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times. -John 13:36-38

Simon of Cyrene the son of Canaan replaced Simon Peter the son of Shem who promised Jesus he would even go to death with Him.

I said earlier that we could spend weeks on the names and people listed in today's verses. But in order to reach the end of the Bible sometime this century we'll have to pass over a lot of them. Pay attention to the tribes of the people as you read the Bible and you will find riches and treasures there about the three sons of Noah.

Let me ask you a question though not just about the line of Ham, but specifically the line of Canaan. Of the 11 groups of people who came from him can any of you tell me where the Jebusites settled, what city of biblical importance they held, or the name an important Jebusite?

Jerusalem was settled by the Jebusites and even after they were almost completely driven out during the conquest of Canaan, there remained a Jebusite presence there until the time of David.

The name Jebus means “treading down” or “threshing place” and surprisingly this name becomes a prophecy of the point in history when David buys the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

This became the spot where Solomon’s temple would be built and is the exact same place that almost 1000 years earlier Abraham went to offer his son Isaac. It is also the spot where the Temple Mount stands today and which is the single most contested piece of real estate on earth.

If you understand who these people are in Chapter 10, you can understand so very much more about our past, where we are going, and how we will get there.

¹⁸ (con’t)....Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.

¹⁹ And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

These locations are given to indicate that the Canaanites settled in the land that would eventually be given to Abraham and then to his son Isaac and then to his son Israel. It is generally showing that they filled the land from north to south and from east to west. These cities will be mentioned again as the Bible continues.

²⁰ These *were* the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands *and* in their nations.

As you can see, the Hamites and the Canaanites figure prominently in the Bible. Many of these people groups were destroyed in conquests and battles, but many of them survive partially intact or after having interbred with other people groups. The accomplishments of these people have been immense and today Ham's children fill the earth.

III. The Hamites Near You

I was flipping through the TV a while back, and at our house that doesn't take long. We have about 15 channels and most of them are pretty terrible. But in hopes of finding something worthwhile, and knowing it wouldn't be on the Christian channel, I clicked down the line.

I came to an education channel and there was this guy talking about Mayan hieroglyphs. I thought, "BO-RING," but I stopped for a sec anyway. I figured it would be some crazy nonsense about how Mayans have predicted the end of the world or something.

Instead it was Dr. Mark Van Stone who is a Professor of Art History at Southwestern College. He not only reads hieroglyphs, but writes them out too. He did a general greeting to the producer of the show in Mayan and it took an immense amount of labor and care and very special pens to get it just right.

To me, it was one of the most fascinating 10 minutes I've spent outside of the Bible in eons. As I watched him write and enunciate each character, I thought "This guy has dedicated his life to something that most people would simply pass by without a second thought."

Here is this ancient language and ancient writing and a man from the sons of Japheth is keeping it alive. You see, the Mayans come from the line of Ham and all of their great achievements indirectly reflect a part of this third son of Noah. Along with the Mayans, the Aztecs, the Incas, the Babylonians etc. come from Ham.

So what does it mean to be a "servant of servants" in the context of the curse pronounced by Noah? Well, like I said, the curse was on Canaan, but it reflects itself in the entire line of Ham. The line of Shem is God's servant

in the spiritual sense and the line of Japheth is God's servant in an intellectual way.

The line of Ham however, has provided physical service and invention to the world and therefore, what they have produced has served both Shem and Japheth. In other words, Ham has been a servant of servants.

Two of the great ancient empires of the world, the Egyptians and the Sumerians were from Ham. The sea-going Phoenicians descended from Ham. The African tribes and the Chinese and Japanese people all descend from Ham as do the American Indian tribes which moved from the direction of Asia.

Ham's sons were the original great explorers, travelling to all parts of the world. They were the first people to cultivate food staples like corn, potatoes, beans, and so on. The Japanese people have made amazing developments in plant grafting and pollination.

Most of the basic forms and types of building structures, and the materials and tools for building have come from the line of Ham. They developed many types of fabrics and sewing and weaving techniques and devices.

Medicines and surgical instruments and practices going back for eons came from Ham's line as do most concepts of practical mathematics, surveying, and navigation. Banks, postal systems, commerce, machinery, and trade money came from them too.

And paper development, ink for writing, block printing, movable type, and many other writing and communication skills come from them. The further back you go, we find that almost every basic system or device that we use for living and for making life convenient come from one of the sons of Ham.

In this sense, they have been mankind's servants in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Noah. However and despite this, almost all of their inventive skills have come to a certain point and stopped. Eventually, the sons of Japheth or Shem step in and refine them and make them more useful.

And something else... just as we had an interesting flood story in the line of Japheth last week, we have one in the line of Ham too. The Chinese have a tradition that their first king, Fohi, which is Chinese for Noah, appeared on the mountains of Chin which was surrounded by a rainbow after the world was covered with water.

He sacrificed animals to God, just like the Genesis story. And he had a great grandson named Sin, which again perfectly matches the Bible. The Sinites, named after Canaan's son Sin, lived at exactly the time that the Chinese culture developed. Even today the Chinese culture is called the Sino culture after Sin.

Another flood tradition within the Chinese culture comes from the Miao tribe of southwest China. It's said that before they were ever visited by missionaries, they believed that God had once destroyed the entire world by flood because of man's wickedness, but He saved a righteous man named Nuah, his wife, and their three sons.

Nuah's sons names were Lo Han (Ham), Lo Shen (Shem), and Yah-hu or Japheth. They and pairs of animals were all saved by building a giant ship.

The Chinese also have a Book of History known as the Shu Jing which was compiled by Confucius. This book speaks about an Emperor Shun who ruled about 2200BC when the first dynasty began. He worshipped and sacrificed a bull to Shang Di or the Heavenly Ruler.

Shang Di corresponds to Shaddai who the Almighty of the Bible. Apparently, these sacrifices to Shang Di went on until 1911 when the last Chinese emperor was deposed.

Of all of those who descend from the line of Ham, three in particular have had a huge affect on my own life. You see, the prettiest Hamites around are my wife Hideko and my daughter Tangerine.

Both of them, along with my son, Thorr, are the Hamites closest to me. And like so many from their line over the centuries, God has shown grace and favor on each of them.

The wonderful story of the Bible is that despite whom we are, or where we come from, God looks at us all the same when we call on Jesus Christ as Lord. It doesn't matter what our color is, where we were born, how much money we have, or any other thing.

All of us are or were enemies of God, but He reaches out His hands to us through His word which tells of Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life that no one has ever lived and He was willing to give that life up for any who call on His name. We are all either sons of Shem, sons of Ham, or sons of Japheth. And they are all sons of Noah and Noah came from Adam.

We bear Adam's guilt and Jesus wants to take it away from us. Let me tell you how He will do it for you...

The Line of Ham

Noah's youngest son had the name of Ham
He displeased his father doing a disgraceful thing
This put his life into a real jamb
And on his youngest son, a curse it would bring
The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan
From these four groups Ham's line has spread around the world
Cush had six sons to carry his name on
And so his seed spread as his descendant's lines unfurled

Cush begot Nimrod, a mighty one on the earth
He was a mighty hunter before the Lord
He did great things, but his actions brought a dearth
To the spiritual life of many sons of Noah's horde
The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh
These cities he built in the frightful land of Shinar
And from that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh
And also Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen he built them near and far
Mizraim became the people where Egypt is now
And they grew into six more groups as the years passed
From these came the Philistines who pestered Israel... somehow!
By them the Israelites were continuously harassed

Canaan, the one to whom Noah directed his curse
Became eleven groups of peoples that settled in the Land
They spread around, never fearing the worse
But were eventually displaced by Israel, and God's mighty hand
Despite being a servant of servants and the unfavored son
The line of Ham, great things they have done

And many of these people did our precious Jesus save
Because for all of Noah's sons, His life He gave
People from Ham's line all around earth
Celebrate Jesus' victory at the cross of Calvary
And of Jesus' name, they too proclaim His worth
Jesus is the Savior of all the people, you see

And to this day we remember Simon of Cyrene
Who carried the Lord's cross up that hill of Calvary
A servant of the Servant, is how Simon is seen
The ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy
And for me, what a blessing the line of Ham has been
My wife and children all came from this line
But like so many others, they were washed from every sin
When they called out in faith, "Yes, Jesus is mine."
Thank You Lord for grace upon the people of the earth
May we ever sing Your praise and of Your infinite worth

Hallelujah and Amen...

Next we'll finish Chapter 10 with – Genesis 10:21-32, The Table of Nations,
Part 3, The Sons of Shem