

God's Prophetic Future for Israel and the Nations (Gen 9-12)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on 5/22/2011

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AIG VIDEO INTRO

Gen 9:1 *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth* [Noah came off the ark with the original "my three sons" ... and God blesses all 3 sons equally and their fruitfulness and families and their filling the earth. All of that is part of God's blessing and plan of grace in multiplication of humanity and resulting diversity of people, all part of God's plan, and in v. 7, God repeats this blessing for emphasis to this family]

⁷*As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.* ⁸*Then God spoke to Noah **and to his sons** with him, saying,* ⁹*"Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you ...* [and His covenant has the sign of the multi-colored rainbow as a reminder of God's grace in this universal covenant for the whole human race and the planet]

¹⁷*And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and **all flesh that is on the earth.**"* ¹⁸*Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.* ¹⁹*These three were the sons of Noah, and **from these the whole earth was populated** ...* [Noah's "my 3 sons" developed all peoples of today]

In v. 26, Noah speaks an oracle, a blessing, that scholars tell us is also spoken as a prophecy: *"Blessed be **the LORD [YAHWEH], The God of Shem**; And let Canaan be his servant.* ²⁷ ***May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem ...***

Now a lot of people have written about the servitude of Canaan, and I've dealt with that in a past message and won't repeat it here, but you're welcome to go back and listen to it or read the notes on Genesis 9 online. There's a lot of bad theology about "the curse on Ham," (Ken Ham of AiG says he's especially sensitive to that question because his last name is Ham!). But there is no curse on Ham, what you have is a prophecy that *Canaan*, the Canaanites, notoriously wicked pagans would be subjugated by Shem and that did take place historically in the conquest and conquer of Canaan by descendants of Shem that we call Israel, the OT Jews, who were Shemites, or Semitic people ("anti-semitic" today = anti-Jewish). But individual Canaanites could be blessed if they put faith in the "God of Shem," and many did and were (ex: Joshua 6, Matt. 15).

But in focusing on Canaan in this text, a lot of writers miss what is of huge historical importance, what Noah prophesied about his sons Shem and Japheth. All 3 sons were blessed, including Ham (v. 1). The covenant was with all of them and their descendants to come (v. 8-9), but notice in v. 26 Yahweh (the LORD) was blessed as *"the God of Shem."* Back in 3:15, God had promised a seed to Eve, a descendant to come, who would undo the fall and the sin of our first parents for the world. But her first son murdered her 2nd! The question is who would this seed/descendant come through?

In Gen 4:1, some think Eve thinks her first son is this one, this Lord, the Messiah? But she's raising Cain, not Christ. The Messiah is not in the ungodly line of Cain. Gen. 4:26 ends with their 3rd son Seth and his line, "*then men began to call on the name of the LORD/Yahweh.*" Then chapter 5 traces the godly line through Seth, including Enoch who walked with God and was raptured up to heaven without ever dying, and Methuselah who God blessed with the longest lifespan of any human. It is in this godly line of Seth we read in 5:29 one born who his dad thinks may be the savior?

Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest [or relief] from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed"[he will save us?]

Noah does deliver his family and those in him, in the ark, from the judgment of God on the earth in the flood, but Noah is a sinner, as we quickly find out in Genesis 9, so we're still looking for Messiah. Gen. 9:26 tells us which son of Noah we should keep looking thru. Shem would know God as Yahweh, God would be his uniquely. It would be this line that God would choose and use to bless the other sons in Noah's family and their descendants to all families of earth.

It wasn't the line of Cain (Genesis 4) or Noah's sons Ham or Japheth (Genesis 10). It was through Adam's son Seth (Genesis 5, which ends with Noah) through the line of Noah's son Shem.

Genesis 11:10 *These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood ...²⁶ Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of **Abram** ...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** ...*

Genesis 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, 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 of the earth will be blessed.**" [later verses in Genesis add "seed/descendants" and "nations" language as God repeats this promise to Abraham and his seed Isaac and his seed Jacob – a big point of Genesis is tracing the godly line of the promises through one family and one nation for all families/nations of the earth]*

In the next 7 verses, the word "land" appears 7x. There is this land, this promised land of Canaan (v. 7), that for the rest of the OT and into the NT serves as the center stage of Scripture and the drama of redemption. The purpose of this land in v. 1, is that Abram and his people would *be a blessing* (end of v. 2) to all people groups (v. 3).

That's the purpose of this Promised Land, to be a platform for the saving grace of God to go forth from the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (later named Israel) to bless all the families of the earth by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through a descendant in that line, the seed of a woman, promised in Gen 3:15, the Messiah.

Israel is at the center of most of the biblical story to be a launching pad for God's saving message to orbit the whole earth. The gospel is not just to the Jew first, but through the Jew, also to the Gentiles. Israel is right in the heart of the Middle East, in God's providence strategically in the center of multiple continents, on the coast where you could go abroad, or east to modern Asia and Russia, northwest to Europe, south to Africa. It was right in the trade route so that nations would pass through Israel on their way to other nations. And all of this is by the design of a sovereign gracious global God so that Israel would be a light to all of those nations.

Gen 12:3 reveals the big point of the OT *and* the NT, that a lot of people don't realize – it was never just about a land, it was always about God's plan to use His people from this strategic location to reach all the other peoples of earth, Abraham's seed in the Middle East were to tell of the Prince of Peace, Israelis were to love Arabs, Hebrews were to give the gospel to those who hate them, Jews to even tell Germans about Jesus, Israel is to witness to Palestinians! God chose His people to spread His good news to all peoples, and He'll choose to use this little tiny nation to reach all of the nations.

Israel will bless North-South-East-West, red-yellow-black-white, Arabians, Africans, Asians, Europeans, and even some Americans! And God is not done with the nation Israel or other nations, in fact, the reason God is not through with the Jews is *for the nations, too!* The connection between God's future for the nation Israel and other nations of the earth is not well known today, but should be. Some in focus on Israel's future miss God's plan for other nations in the future. Others teach ethnic or national Israel has no future. Some teach the church is Israel without replacing/ruling out a future mass salvation of ethnic or national Israel (ex: R.C. Sproul, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Charles Hodge, Jonathan Edwards, Puritans such as Thomas Boston, William Perkins, the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question #191, *Geneva Bible* on Rom 11).

Richard Sibbes, in *The Bruised Reed* (a classic Puritan paperback): 'The Jews are not yet come in under Christ's banner; but God, that hath persuaded Japheth to come into the tents of Shem, will persuade Shem to come into the tents of Japheth, Gen. 9:27. The "fullness of the Gentiles is not yet come in", Rom. 11:25'¹

One thing the early Reformed English-speaking/Puritan tradition virtually all agreed on was that God had a future plan for Israel which related to His future plans for other nations, too ("the fullness of the Gentiles" in Rom 11. in connection with the "all Israel" God would save then). This perspective has been lost by many in that tradition today, but if you want to study that further, see Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*. They believed it was essential to healthy churches among Gentiles that we share the prayers, passion and perspective that Paul had in Romans 9-11 for his own people the Jews, and for all the peoples of the earth to be blessed, "*all Israel ... the fullness of Gentiles.*" Many in history have seen God's future for the nation Israel from His promises to Abraham, reaffirmed in Rom. 11, but I want us tonight to look again at the lesser known promise *before* Abraham, the promise/prophecy of Gen. 9, and how it relates to other nations, and the fullness of God's plans for other nations.

Let's look back at Gen. 9:27 in light of God's unfolding plan and promises for both Jew *and* Gentile. Shem and his descendants, the Jewish people that Abraham fathered, would have God as covenant LORD (9:26), but not because of God's exclusive plan for 1 nation (singular).

Israel was to launch God's inclusive plan for all nations (plural). God blesses all 3 of Noah's sons (v. 1) and the branches of mankind that developed from them (chapter 10). The blessing of 9:26 was not just for Shem. His brother would expand (v. 27, in the context of v. 1, 7, filling the earth and spreading out, large territory is a play off the name Japheth, which means "large" in Hebrew).

Who are the descendants of Japheth? Look at Genesis 10:2-5.

² *The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai [later Medes and Persians] and Javan [later Greece / Greeks] and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras [later Italy / Rome? Some think Meshech stands for Russia; v. 4 mentions Tarshish, probably Spain] ...*

⁵ *From these the coastlands of the nations [NKJV "Gentiles"] were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.*

So go back to Gen 9:27. What is God's Word saying about Japheth and his descendants, and what does it mean for us? NKJV "**May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem ...**"

NIV "*May God extend the territory of Japheth ...*"

This is what God did do in history for Japheth's Gentile offspring, their territory extended far beyond Europe and the east, Americas? One book explains when in Bible times a 'Greek empire gained prominence ... it was also during this period that the full extent of Noah's peculiar prophecy was realized, for ... Japheth was being enlarged through the conquests of the Greeks [from Javan, v. 2] and had established residence in the "tents of Shem" on the soil of Canaan (Gen 9:27) ... by the time of the New Testament, it was the Japhetite Romans [also descended from Japheth's sons in v. 2] who controlled the land ...'² [dwelling in the territory with Israel]

So for Japheth to be enlarged in its territory and kingdoms and to live with descendants of Shem geographically can be seen in the history of Israel, but the Hebrew phrase "dwell in the tents of" has a closer meaning than being in the same part of the world. It is a term of closeness (Gen 25:67 used of Isaac and his wife brought into the tent of the family, i.e., intimacy). One Jewish writer explains '*dwell* here has the meaning of "having fellowship with."³

TMC professor Will Varner experienced this in Bible lands when a Bedouin shepherd invited him into his tent and shared coffee with him and hospitality and kindness and fellowship. A tent was home and he said the idea of being brought into someone's tent, however long, is to share together for that time, "my tent is your tent," *mi casa es su casa*, whatever is mine is yours, you are at home here. Shem and his descendants would have Yahweh as their God (v. 26) not to keep to themselves to share the blessing with Japheth (v. 27)

Salvation came to the Jew first (v. 26) and also to the Gentile (v. 27) who shares in Abraham's tent by faith (i.e., family, spiritually). The Lord was the God of Shem, not because Shem was *better than* his brothers, but so he'd be *a blessing to* his brothers. Remember that Noah in v. 1 heard "my 3 sons" were all blessed by God and it was God's plan for their descendants to spread out all across earth.

But before Genesis 10 tells who these descendants would be and where they would settle, Noah knows which of my 3 sons the line of the Lord would come through, the promised Messiah of Gen. 3. And he also knew that a day would come when Japheth would also come to share the spiritual blessings with the Jews (like Eph. 2), as fellow family members in the same tent, same house, same father.

Most of us in this room are descendants of Japheth (the Indo-European peoples). Noah proclaimed Japheth would be enlarged, v. 27. The territory of Japheth's descendants spread farther than all the others (Ham mostly Africa, Shem mostly Middle East, but the sons of Japheth spread far and wide, Europe, America, Asia?). Later prominent Japhethites were Greeks and Roman, and it was really in NT times, that we begin to see Japheth's descendents coming into the household of faith with Semitic Jewish Christians.

Both the ancient Jewish Targum writings and the church fathers identify this text as the incorporation of Jew and Gentiles together into the same family of faith. Even before that day, the Scriptures of the God of Shem (Hebrew OT) were translated into Greek so that the descendants of Japheth or Jews speaking his dialect could share in the blessings. One writer points out: "Gentile Christians are for the most part Japhethites dwelling in the tents of Shem"⁴

Arthur W. Pink wrote: "And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" intimates that Japheth was to be Shem's guest, that he should share the rest and shelter of Shem's tabernacles ... [and he points out how our Bible] is that of the God of *Israel*; the Saviour in whom we trust is the seed of *Abraham*; the Old Testament was ... for Israel; and the New Testament though ... in [Japheth's language], and, therefore for us, was penned by *Jewish fingers* ... "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22); and [yet] that remarkable statement of the Apostle Paul's in Romans 11 where, writing of the Gentiles, he says, "And thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in *among them* (Israel), ... Japheth "dwelling in the tents of Shem."⁵

Our Jewish savior, John 1:14 says, became flesh and "dwelt among us" (literally, *tabernacled among us / pitched His tent among us*). This is a bridge to the Messiah promised in Genesis 12, for all the families / nations of the earth, but before he gets there, Genesis 10 outlines specific families / nations that will come into Shem's fold.

Genesis 10:5 (NKJV) *From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.* ⁶ *The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim [Egypt], Put, and Canaan.* ⁷ *The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.*

This isn't just a list of names and nations. Gen 12:3 says to Shem's seed Abram "*in you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*" The nations of the Gentiles in Genesis 10 and beyond were all to be blessed in Abram, "in his tent," his multi-ethnic family of faith, a physical seed sharing the spiritual blessings with many nations.

Look at Psalm 47. And what I want to do is look at prophecies that go beyond individuals from nations, to actual nations that God says He will bless. God has a plan for nations (plural) not just Israel, but nations God promises to enfold in the tents of Shem thru Abram.

Psalm 47:8 *God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.* ⁹ *The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham ...* [ESV Study Bible (ESVSB) says ‘the psalm looks forward to a time when the Gentile princes of the peoples gather the worship as the people of the God of Abraham, i.e., the people to whom the blessing of Abraham has finally come]

Derek Kidner explains: ‘peoples are to become one *people*, and they will no longer be outsiders but within the covenant; this is implied in their being called *the people of the God of Abraham*. It is the abundant fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 12:3; it anticipates what Paul expounds of the inclusion of the Gentiles as Abraham’s sons (Rom 4:11; Gal 3:7-9) [Eph 2:11-22, etc.]’⁶

Psalm 67:1 *God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us—Selah.* ² *That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.* ³ *Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.* ⁴ *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth.* *Selah.* ⁵ *Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.* ⁶ *The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.* ⁷ **God blesses us [Israel], That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.**

ESVSB: Singing this helps Israel to keep its own calling in view: their blessing is not simply for themselves but for the Gentiles too (cf. Gen. 12:2–3). Each Israelite is a player in a grand story that stretches far beyond the boundaries of his own life, or even of his own land ... that God’s way may be known on earth—specifically, that his saving power might be known among all nations. God called Abram both to bless him and his descendants and to make them a vehicle of blessing to the Gentiles (Gen. 12:2–3). These words turn that calling into a song.’

Psalm 68:29 *Because of Your temple at Jerusalem Kings will bring gifts to You ...* [ESVSB ‘These are Gentile kings’] ³¹ *Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia [Cush, Sudan today] will quickly stretch out her hands to God.* ³² *Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, Sing praises to the Lord ...*

ESVSB ‘Egypt and Cush ... will come to know God, cf. Isa. 45:14 ... the NT explains that this is taking place in the time after Christ’s resurrection ... the call goes out to all the Gentile kingdoms of the earth, urging them to sing to God now (why wait for the messianic era?) ... As Israelites sing this, they should be overwhelmed with gratitude at the astonishing privilege of being God’s vehicle of blessing to the world. Today, believers from all nations can sing this with gratitude that God was faithful to his promises to bring the light to the world; they too can share in grateful awe at their privilege of being God’s vehicle for bringing the world further blessing.’

Psalm 86:9 *All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.*

ESVSB cites Gen. 12:3: ‘God called Abraham so that his family would be the vehicle of bringing this knowledge to the rest of mankind; the OT looks forward to an era in which this will happen ... The words of Ps. 86:9 are incorporated into a song in Rev. 15:4.

Ps 87:4 *I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me; Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia [Cush, Gentile nations in Gen. 10]: ‘This one was born there.’* ⁵ *But of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her”; And the Most High Himself will establish her.* ⁶ *The LORD will count when He registers the peoples, “This one was born there.” Selah.*

ESVSB says these verses describing Zion/Israel are ‘startling: one expects a reference to those who know me, but the list is composed of Gentile nations: Rahab (a nickname for Egypt, cf. Isa. 30:7), Babylon, Philistia, Tyre (a Phoenician city, culturally Canaanite), and Cush (Nubia, the region south of Egypt)—all of which had been, at one time or another, enemies of God's people and the city of Jerusalem. And yet, the Most High himself will establish Zion, in order to allow the peoples to be treated as born in her. When the people of God sing this, they are keeping themselves focused on their God-given purpose, to be a light for the Gentiles ...’

One Jewish commentator writes: “the chief lesson that emerges from the psalm is that Zion is the birthplace of all those who come to it to serve God there, even if they are non-Jews and even if they come from very far-off lands.”⁷ [cf. Jew in John 3:10 and 4:19-24]

Turn to Isaiah 60 for an even more astonishing development. The nations of Gen. 10 in these overlooked passages, worship the God of Shem or will. God has a future for them with Shemites/Israelites.

Isaiah 18:1 *Alas, oh land of whirring wings Which lies beyond the rivers of Cush [i.e., deep dark Africa, beyond modern Sudan]* ² *Which sends envoys by the sea, Even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters. Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, To a people feared far and wide, A powerful and oppressive nation Whose land the rivers divide.* ³ *All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth, As soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see it ...* ² *At that time a gift of homage will be **brought to the LORD of hosts From a people tall and smooth, Even from a people feared far and wide, A powerful and oppressive nation, Whose land the rivers divide— To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, even Mount Zion.***

ESVSB on “at that time” – ‘when God consummates history with the victory of his own kingdom (either, as some would hold, at the time of the future millennial kingdom [or sometime before?], or, as others would hold, when God establishes the new heavens and new earth [see Rev. 21:1]). *tribute will be brought to the Lord of hosts.* Gentile nations will worship God ... God's purpose of grace for the nations will triumph by his power alone (cf. Ps. 68:28–35; 87:1–7; Isa. 2:2–4; 11:10; Acts 11:18; Rev. 7:9–10).’

19:1 *The oracle concerning Egypt ... [and in the prophetic pattern there is judgment for the nation of Egypt, but that's not all. When you get to v. 18, this would be even more jaw-dropping to Jews] ...*¹⁸ *In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.*

[Calvin explained that means 5 out of 6 cities in the nation of Egypt will worship the God of Israel, and the 6th will be judged when God's plan for Egypt is completed in this text]

¹⁹ *In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border.*

One of my favorite preachers, Brian Borgman, explains "in that day" goes beyond OT times to the "the last days" and "altar" is using the language of true worship of that day.⁸ This would be like "swords into plowshares" in 2:4, language of the day to communicate a point (there peace by disarmament), here, Egypt as a people will truly worship Jesus. McGee explained the cross will replace the crescent as the sign of Egypt's spiritual allegiance, becoming Christian, not Muslim.

²⁰ *It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior [root word Yeshua – Jesus!] and a Champion, and He will deliver them ...*

*... ²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, **a blessing in the midst of the earth,** ²⁵ whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is **Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.**"*

ESVSB on v. 24-25: 'God's overflowing blessing unites the entire world as his own (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; Gal. 3:7–9, 26–29; Eph. 2:11–22; 3:6; Col. 3:11; Rev. 7:9–10).'

Borgman in the same message points out Egypt and Assyria were Israel's worst 2 enemies in history, Assyria covers Syria, Iraq, and Turkey today. He also points out that a precursor to this fulfillment seems to be taking place in our day or preparing to ... 15-20% of Egyptians are Christian today, according to some estimates. In the Muslim lands covering the ancient kingdom of Assyria many are turning to Jesus (Yeshua) already. Borgman also cites a statistic that more Muslims have converted to Christianity in the last 20 years than prior 1,000!⁹

Christopher Wright, in his book, *The Mission of God* [a missions magnum opus]: 'Personally, I find Isaiah 19:16-25 one of the most breathtaking pronouncements of any prophet and certainly one of the most missiologically significant texts in the Old Testament ... Israel will be merged with ... Egypt and Assyria, such that the Abrahamic promise is not only fulfilled *in* them but *through* them. The two verbal references to the text of Genesis 12:1-3 are (1) ... verse 25 ("The LORD Almighty will bless them", matching the same form as "I will bless you" in Gen 12:2b), and (2) the phrase "will be a blessing" ... [v. 24] ... is a prophetic affirmation about Israel, Egypt and Assyria combined (they will together "be a blessing in the midst of the earth"). So these foreign nations come not only to *experience* blessing but to *be* "a blessing on the earth." ... recipients of the Abrahamic blessing become the agents of it.'¹⁰

I believe the Puritans were right to believe in a future conversion of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles coinciding somehow, even specific Gentile nations worshipping Yeshua with Israel. Ironically some in their tradition today would affirm that God has a future for nations, but not the nation Israel (as if to say "we're ok with God saving individual Jews here and there, or a mass conversion of a non-Jewish nation, but no mass conversion of the Jewish nation?). But I think to interpret Isaiah 19 without imposing prejudice or presupposition on the text requires us to see that the Lord not only has massive saving purposes in the future for Gentiles, but for Israel, too.¹¹

Matthew Henry explains it better than I: 'We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be thought to have its full accomplishment short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ

... Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel fold under Christ the great shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, *Israel shall make a third with them* (Isa. 19:24); they shall become a *three-fold cord, not easily broken* ... they shall become *one sheep-fold under one shepherd* [Jesus, Jn 10]. Thus united, they shall be *a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless*, v. 24, 25. (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all [and he cites Romans 11:17 for Gentiles grafted into the olive with Israel] ... Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people whom he takes under his protection ... They shall be owned together by him as jointly his, his in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessing.¹² [Eph. 3:6 says “*Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel...fellow sharers of promise*” NIV]

John Calvin comments on Isa. 19:25 ‘By calling the Egyptians “*the people of God*,” he means that they will share in the honor [of Israel] ... When he calls Assyrians *the work of his hands*, he distinguishes them by the title peculiar to his Church...[in Eph 2:10]... *And Israel my inheritance* ... *Israel* ... among the new brethren still holds the rank and honor of the first-born ... indeed that covenant which the Lord first made with [Israel], bestowed on them the privilege which cannot be made void by their ingratitude; for “*the gifts and calling of God are [irrevocable]*” as Paul declares (Romans 11:29) who shews that in the house of God [Israel is] the first-born. (Ephesians 2:12.) Although therefore the grace of God is now more widely spread, yet they still hold the highest rank, not by their own merit, but by the firmness of the promises.’¹³

Later in Calvin’s commentary on Isaiah he writes of future saving grace for Israel, that there’s still ‘hope among the Jews, although from their unconquerable obstinacy it might be inferred that they were altogether cast off and doomed to eternal death [as some in history concluded after Israel rejected Messiah, even Luther. But Calvin argues] because God is continually mindful of his covenant, and “*his gifts and calling are [irrevocable]*” (Rom. 11:29), Paul justly concludes that it is impossible that they [Israel in the future] shall not at length be collected along with the Gentiles that out of both “there may be one fold under Christ” (John 10:16).’¹⁴

The Reformation Study Bible comments on Isaiah 19:24: “**blessing in the midst of the land.** Israel, Egypt, and Assyria will join in the patriarchal promises (Gen. 12:2, 3). v.25 **people ... work of My hands ... inheritance.** Each will share in full covenant membership, signified by three designations: “people ... work of My hands ... inheritance”

“*inheritance*” – Eph. 3:6 says “Gentiles are fellow heirs” (that’s inheritance language, used in OT of Israel, firstborn sons, etc.)

“*work of my hands*” – Ephesians says the church is the handiwork of God, a new creation, a new body, also mentioned in Eph. 3:6

“*My people*” – Eph. 3:6 also makes clear Gentiles share in that and all the promises that go with it as one people of God. Paul never says God is through with the Jews (quite the opposite in Romans) but even the OT says God considers other nations His people, too. God’s plan for the future is not all about Israel, and never was, but God never abandoned His people (Rom. 9-11).

Some concede a future mass conversion prophesied for Egypt and Assyria and other nations in Isaiah 19, but deny the same for the nation of Israel. Some go to great lengths to explain away any future positive prophecy about Israel as only applying to the church, the replacement of Israel in their theology. The technical term is supersessionism (church *supersedes* Israel or replaces Israel in God's program) and in some forms it denies any future for ethnic Israel, so prophecies like this are spiritualized or allegorized in relation to Israel. I find that an inconsistent interpretation method, inconsistent with Scripture, and inconsistent with what many taught in Reformation tradition, esp. Puritans who believed in a future mass conversion of ethnic Israel.

Most in the Reformed tradition believe the church *is* Israel spiritually, but it didn't mean to many that physical Israel had no future ethnically or nationally to be brought as a whole into the church and back into the people of God, ala Romans 11. Robert Leighton preached in 1642 about future Israel from Isaiah 60, arguing v. 1-2 is not *merely* the church: 'Christ came *of* the Jews, and came first *to* them... that people of the Jews shall once more be commanded to *arise* and *shine* [as Isa. 60:1-2 says], and their return shall be *the riches of the Gentiles* (Rom. 11.12), and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the church of God did not yet behold.'¹⁵

v. 3: "**Nations will come to your light** ... [v. 6 mentions some by name] *A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.*⁷ *All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you* [all nations from Genesis] ...⁹ *Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; And the ships of Tarshish* [Spain, he's now moving from the sons of Ham to sons of Japheth from Gen. 10] *will come first, To bring your sons from afar, Their silver and their gold with them, For the name of the LORD your God, And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.*¹⁰ *Foreigners will build up your walls ...*¹³ *The glory of Lebanon will come to you* [yes, even Muslim Lebanon]...

66:18 *For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues* [cf. Gen 11]. *And they shall come and see My glory.*¹⁹ *I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan* [Japheth's sons from Gen. 10], *to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.*

Arthur W. Pink said Gen. 12:3 'included within its scope the call and blessing of the Gentiles ... by which God's mercy might be extended to the whole earth ... Abraham was ... a medium of blessing to others ... [Gen 12:3 in its] complete and ultimate fulfillment looks forward to the Millennium, for then it will be that all families of the earth shall receive blessing through Abram and his seed.'¹⁶

Whatever our end times views (taking place before the 2nd coming, and/or millennium and/or new heavens and new earth "nations"?), what is crystal clear is that God has a multi-ethnic family plan that He will make sure to complete before He wraps things up. Our global God has a future for nations, not just individuals from nations, but nations. Not just to the Jew, but also to the Gentiles.

One final note from the descendants of Noah we began with: The order of their names is always Shem, Ham, and Japheth. That was not their birth order, Japheth is oldest, Ham is youngest. But the order seems to be significant, and let me just throw this out:

Matthew 1 begins with the line of Shem through Abraham first and then shows the inclusion of descendants of Ham (Canaan). Then in Matthew 2 some men from the East (Persia, Japheth descendants?) come to worship Jesus. Shem->Ham->Japheth at Christ's birth.

On His way to the cross, we see a man from Africa (seed of Ham) and then at the cross a Roman soldier seems to trust Christ as well (descendant of Japheth). Shem->Ham->Japheth at Christ's death. At the end of His gospel He tells His Shemite Jewish disciples to go and make "disciples of all nations" ... how did they do it?

Acts 8 – first non-Jewish convert is an African Cushite / Ethiopian (descendant of Ham) before the Gentile Cornelius (Japhethite) is saved. Shem->Ham->Japheth is the order the book of Acts unfolds. This also matches redemptive history earlier, as Shemite Israelites lived in Bible times in the land of Ham (Egypt and Canaan) and later in the land of Japheth (Greek / Roman empire) and faith came through the Jews. Shem->Ham->Japheth in the multi-ethnic family

To the Jew first and also the Gentile or Greek (Japhethite). I hope you see there's a lot more in Genesis 9-11 than we ever realized, and there is a lot more to come in God's prophetic family plan.

¹ As cited by Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, p. 43, citing other Puritans along those lines as well.

² Keith Augustus Burgon, *The Blessing of Africa*, p. 54.

³ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, 1st ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 199-200.

⁴ (Delitzsch, 1:298)

⁵ A. W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Escondido, CA: The Ephesians Four Group, 2000), 127-28.

⁶ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 178.

⁷ Amos Hakham, *Psalms*, 3 vols., Koschitzky Edition (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 2:300.

⁸ Brian Borgman, "Messages to Cush (Ethiopia) & Egypt," www.sermonaudio.com/gracenevada [November 1998]

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*, p. 236.

¹¹ Some of below notes are from "One People of God By Adopting Grace," sermon on Ephesians 3:6, 7/31/2011, www.sermonaudio.com/gcbc

¹² *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* : Complete and unabridged in one volume (Is 19:18). Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹³ Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Vol. 2, p. 49 (CCEL edition).

¹⁴ *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1999), 8:269.

¹⁵ As cited by Murray, p. 75.

¹⁶ Pink, (p. 142)