

As we come to Genesis 10 this morning I want to hazard a guess at what you're thinking; Zane, why on earth are you preaching on Genesis Ten.... How can anything helpful or meaningful come from that crazy long list of names, tribes and nations? Why didn't you skip over chapter ten and get to the tower of babel? Why did you make poor X read through all of that?!

I figure you're thinking some of those things, because this week as I've prepared I've thought those things. How can a list of 70 names, tribes, and nations which is thousands of years old offer anything to a Christian today? What are we going to get out of this?

As we open Genesis 10 I'm hoping we'll see two things running through the passage **{slide 2}**; firstly God's continued pattern of blessing to all creation. It's a strong thread that's been picked up time and time again since we began this journey in Genesis about three months ago. We saw it again just last week, as God was blessed by Noah.

The second thing I hope that we are reminded of, that we've been reminded right throughout these first ten chapters so far **{slide 3}** is that God is King, his will, his word *will not be thwarted*.

It's a tricky passage; so let's pray and ask God to guide us.

Father God it has been a real joy to walk through these early chapters of Genesis and to see your faithfulness despite the way we rebel against you. Today as we open your word, in what is a really tricky passage, please help us to see you in it, to grow closer to you because of it, and to live changed lives as we are transformed by it. Give us an immovable confidence, not in ourselves, but in your faithfulness to us. We ask it in Jesus name and for his glory. Amen.

*i) God's pattern of blessing*

**{slide 4}** We're going to spend some time looking at the mechanics of the passage, before we really hone in on how it impacts us today.

What Moses is recording for us here, is a mass of movement. After the flood the three family lines we are all descended from start to spread out.

First we see an account of the descendants of Japheth in vv.2-5. They are recorded for us in the order of their lands, languages, families and nations.

They spread to the North and West, and are the cradle of Greek civilisation, and the Scythians.

They are people who took to the sea, and formed the island nations (v.5). They go out, on the seas, and fill the earth.

Then we come to Ham, v.6 the father of Canaan.

They are recorded for us in the order of their families, lands, languages and nations. These nations really matter. The descendants of Canaan will be driven out by the Israelites, They will be constantly at war with each other, they will agitate and struggle as a result of the curse in 9:25.

It is from this family, as a result of God's judgement against Canaan, that Egypt will rise. Egypt where where Israel will live in slavery. Where Pharaoh will oppose the God whose name is 'I Am.'

It is from this family, the Great cities of Nimrod will rise (v.8); these cities are important in the life of Israel; Babylon, where Israel will be exiled, Assyria where they will constantly be harried from, and make pacts with for protection instead of turning to Yahweh.

It is Nimrod who in his arrogance and love of power set to build Babel, a city to rival God, and make his own name great. He will spread the religion of Marduk, and be equated with ninurta, the Babylonian war-god due to his prowess in battle.

In the family line of Canaan, we see open rebellion against God, which will continue for generations. The family characteristics, or traits Noah saw in Ham, ring true for generations.

They extend their territories across the fertile Crescent of the Middle east and to Northern Africa.

What surprises us is that even those who openly rebel against God are working out his purpose, as they go out and fill the earth.

The two non-Abrahamic family lines, and nation states have been dealt with and now we come to the most important son of Noah, Shem.

Shem's family is focussed on last as a climax, it is through Shem and his son Eber that Abraham will eventually be born. It is from Abraham that Israel is descended, and the covenant promises of blessing for all the world will be given. It is through this family that the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ is promised, and born into. Matthew 1;17 gives a succinct summary. **{slide 5}**

'17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.'

The descendants of Shem settle in the Persian Gulf. **{slide 6}**

This mass of movement records the migration of these three family lines across the earth, and the human race covering the world from Persia (Elam v.22) in the East, to Ethiopia (Cush v.6) and the Arabian Peninsula in the South, to Antolia - Modern day Turkey (Gomer and Madai v.2) in the North and Crete (Kittim v.4) and Libya (Caphtorim v.14) in the West.

This account encompasses what is about to occur in chapter 11:1-9, the Tower of Babel and so we see again here a pattern. A pattern where God shows grace, before he pronounces judgement. Where God blesses, before he holds to account. It's not the first time we've struck this pattern. We've seen it with Adam and Eve, Abel and Cain, with Noah and the unrighteous, with Shem, Japheth and Ham. God blesses those he makes righteous, and removes those who are ungodly, again.

Before God brings about judgement he warns, and he shows grace, by dispersing the human race across the face of the earth.

God is fulfilling his great purpose for his creation: Gen 1:28

'God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

This mandate is repeated and reiterated in 8:17, 9:1 and 9:7. It's a mandate given to Adam and Eve and to Noah each time God sets a new order in his creation, he repeats this intent.

And so we can see it crystal clear, looking back from our vantage point on this side of the cross, as people living after the death and resurrection of Jesus, that God's word, His intent, will not be thwarted.

As we trace this family line we see time and time again his faithfulness.

His word, the promises he makes, will not be thwarted.

It wasn't thwarted by the lies of satan in the Garden of Eden.

It wasn't thwarted by the rebellion of Adam and Eve.

It wasn't thwarted by the murder of Abel by his brother Cain.

It wasn't thwarted by the violence and oppression of arrogant Lamech.

It wasn't thwarted by the evil hearts of humanity.

It wasn't thwarted by the terrible flood.

It wasn't thwarted by the ongoing sin in Ham or the sons of Canaan.

It wasn't thwarted by the arrogance of Babel.

It wasn't thwarted by the worship of a golden calf.

It wasn't thwarted by the failure of Israel to keep the law.

It wasn't thwarted by the pregnancy of an unmarried virgin.

It wasn't thwarted by the slaughter of innocents at the hands of Herod.

It wasn't thwarted by the betrayal, crucifixion, and death of the Lord Jesus.

**{slide 7}** God is King, his will, his word will not be thwarted. He is saving his people. Each day he is at work in this world, by the power of the Holy Spirit making us, the justified, more like Jesus - he is sanctifying us day by day.

Friends I want us to hold fast to this truth in the difficult times ahead. I don't want to be alarmist, but we know that difficult times are a reality for Christian people.

As we journeyed through Philippians this year we were reminded of the cost of following Jesus. Like the Philippian Christians, today, people around the globe are paying for following Jesus with their lives. In two weeks time we'll be considering the plight of persecuted Christians, as Richard Drury from Barnabas Aid visits us.

The Christian life is not one of comfort, and prosperity. It is a life of death to self, of taking up a cross and carrying it to the glory of God. Brothers and sisters, this world is not going to make life easier for Christians between now and the return of Jesus. We are promised in god's word, that life is going to get harder.

But look at the outworking of God's Word in Revelation 7. Those who suffer for their faith, those who hold fast to Jesus above all else, they will gather at the very throne of God.

Their robes will be made white in the sacrificial death of Jesus, where he has borne all of our sin and shame and instead gives robes of white - symbols of the forgiveness that is ours if we trust in him. And look at their eternal future verse 15. **{slide 8}**

'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them," nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; "he will lead them to springs of living water." "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

If we see that God is King, his will, his word will not be thwarted in even in that extreme case of Christian's being martyred, then surely we can take hope and courage in our own daily trials. **{slide 9}**

Friends I know that many of you have the hardest of times this year. You have known great trials which have tested your faith. You have faced great discouragement. Some have lost loved ones, livelihoods, your identity's have been unsettled, you've had one minister finish up, and a new one start. You've been unable to meet physically as the body of Christ, you haven't shared the Lord's Supper normally...

There is a great deal about this year that has been hard. But even as hard times get harder, even in the midst of the trials and challenges, God is blessing his people.

We have a sure and certain future if our trust is in the Lord Jesus. We too will gather at his throne and worship him. This is absolutely guaranteed in the new covenant in the blood of the Lord Jesus. There will be a reunification. The people's of the world will be drawn back together from different nations, languages, tribes and families.

If we are marked as God's people, in the Lord Jesus, then we will gather together as one to the glory of God.

God is King, his will, his word will not be thwarted.

He will bless those made righteous in the Lord Jesus with eternal life, and he will remove the ungodly. It's a grim reality, but a truth we must hold on to as we seek to make the love of Jesus known wherever God has placed us.

Why don't we pray and ask Him to help us in that task? **{slide 10}**

Heavenly Father, God Almighty, creator of all that is seen and unseen - we thank you for the way you have worked out your good purpose among us. That you have spread people across the face of the globe, as a blessing. Lord Jesus, wherever you have called us to live at this time, would you use us to share your good news? When life is tough, when the challenges we face seem overwhelming, by the power of your Holy Spirit bring us back to your unfailing truth that you are King, that your will, your word *will not be thwarted*. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.