

SESSION FIVE

SIN'S ENTRANCE AND THE DETERIORATION OF MANKIND

Genesis 2:4—11:26

I. INTRODUCTION

This section will consist of five *tôlêdôt* units, one in Gen 2:4—4:26 and four more in 5:1—11:26. The first will demonstrate how man lost his original state of *blessing*, and the remaining four will show how the race continued to deteriorate until the point that the nations of the earth came to be in total rebellion against their Creator. This will set the stage for God's plan to counter man's rebellion by creating a special holy nation, Israel.

The three chapters comprising the *tôlêdôt* of 2:4—4:26 establish the foundation for the need of blessing. The focal point of this section is chapter 3 with the fall of man into sin. The original state of blessing in God's fresh creation was short-lived. The word *tôlêdôt* in Gen 2:4 about "the heavens and the earth" raises the question, "What became of the heavens and the earth that God so marvelously created?" The answer: sin entered and the curse by sin. Deterioration and decay set in and spread rapidly throughout creation! Where God had brought about order, blessing, and holiness, man does just the opposite. The focus has shifted from blessing to cursing.

The focal point of this *tôlêdôt* is chapter 3 in which we are brought face to face with sin's entrance into the human race that brought about the curse and necessitated the blessing. To prepare us for the impact of this event, chapter two reminds us of what was ruined by the fall. Finally, chapter four rounds out the picture, tracing the far-reaching developments of sin and curse in the expansion of a godless society.

II. CREATION OF ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN (2:4-25)

This is the first major section in the present *tôlêdôt*. Here is the picture of the original couple in the fullness of blessing. The chapter, however, is meant to be a contrast to ch 3, and informs us of what was ruined at the fall. Here we see the couple with a God-given capacity to serve and worship God in righteousness. As ch 1 had established God's purpose for man as His theocratic administrator (the mediating agent of His rule), ch 2 captures this function of man. We cannot understand what is involved in the fall of ch 3 if we do not understand what is at stake in ch 2.

"The entire section stresses God's intimate design for the union of male and female as the image of God to serve Him and to keep His commandments so that they might have life. To disobey would bring death and destruction."¹

A. Creation of Life² (2:4-7)

¹Allen Ross, "The Exegetical Exposition of the Pentateuch" (unpublished class notes in 117 Exegesis of the Pentateuch, Dallas Seminary, Fall 1979), 6.

² For further study, see J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul; Human Nature & the Crisis in*

The narrative backs up for a moment and looks at the creation of man from a different angle. Ch 1 had placed the creation of man in the context of the cosmos and highlighted God's intention for man. In contrast, this passage looks at the intimate involvement of YHWH in man's creation and the great care that God took in forming man. Take note of the key terms:

1. **יָצַר** (*yāṣar*) - emphasizes the work of an artist who makes something by design. Yet the man (**אָדָם**) is reminded of his "earthly" nature in that he is formed from the dust (**אֲדָמָה**). He must entertain no hopes of supplanting God's place.
2. **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים** - Yahweh Elohim. This clarifies that the covenant God, Yahweh, is also the Creator God.
3. **נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים** (*nišmat ḥayyim* - "breath of life") – The expression is not necessarily restricted to mankind (see Wenham, *Genesis*, 1:60-61). A similar phrase (but with the synonym **רוּחַ** replacing **נְשֵׁמַת**) occurs in Gen 6:17 and 7:15 regarding all life, whether human or animal. A slightly altered form (but retaining **נְשֵׁמַת**) is found in Gen 7:22, apparently pertaining to both mankind and the animal world. Although Ross claims that this word for *breath* is never used for animals (*Creation & Blessing*, 122), Wenham is probably more correct in asserting that animals, too, have the "breath of life." From a consideration of such verses as Job 27:3, 33:4 and 1 Kgs 17:17, the fundamental idea is that of simply being "alive" (rather than having "eternal life"). To remove the "breath of life," then, would be to take the physical life from the living being (whether man or animal). In some instances, however, the "breath" in man implies more than mere physical life (cf. Job 32:8 – "the **נְשֵׁמַת** of the Almighty gives them understanding"). It may also be linked to man's conscience (see Prov 20:27). It is difficult to be certain if all this is implied in the case of Gen 2:7. Leupold (1:116) claims that it is not the breath itself but the manner of its impartation (i.e., directly and personally by God) that is significant and gives man his dignity.

Consideration should also be given to John 20:22 (anticipatory of Pentecost) in which the receiving of the Holy Spirit is announced in terms recalling Gen 2:7 - "Jesus breathed on them."

The main point in Gen 2:7 is that God directly acted to make man alive (though for man he certainly possessed attributes beyond the animal kingdom, including spiritual life). We can presume that in man's case, the giving of the "breath of life" not only resulted in man being physically alive but possessing spiritual life as well.

4. **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** ("a living being" – so *NASB*) – Here, the word **נֶפֶשׁ** (lit., soul) has the metaphorical idea of the whole "person" or "self." God's *inbreathing* resulted in man becoming a living being (an expression also used in Gen 1:24 and 2:19 of the animal kingdom).

Wenham (*Genesis 1-15*, 61) concludes,

It is not man's possession of 'the breath of life' or his status as a 'living creature' that differentiates him from the animals Animals are described in exactly the same terms. Gen 1:26-28 affirms the uniqueness of man by stating that man alone is made in God's image and by giving man authority over animals.

Man created in this careful manner had the capacity to serve God.

B. The Setting for Obedience to the Stipulated Commandments (2:8-17)

This section centers on the garden which provides the arena for the test of obedience. The emphasis is on the trees in the garden:

Tree of life - a means of preserving and promoting life in their blissful state.

Tree of the knowledge of good and evil - A merism for the things which protect and destroy life. This results in minds darkened by the knowledge of evil.

To overstep the bounds will bring catastrophe . . . death. This death will be both spiritual and physical.

We should take note that man was created to be a worshipper, not simply a gardener. His task is characterized by high spiritual service and obedience. Take note of the following terms:

שָׁמַר (*šāmar* - keep, guard) - used for keeping the commandments and taking heed to obey God's word.

עָבַד (*'ābad* - serve) - reflects man as a servant of YHWH, the highest spiritual service that man can have.

צִוָּה (*šāwâ* - to command) - the major word for command/commandments in the OT (man's proper place is to be instructed by God and to submit to that instruction).

Conclusion: Mankind is prepared with spiritual capacity and placed in the setting for the test of his obedience as a true worshipper of God, with life and death at stake.

C. Completion of the Creation of the Image (2:18-25)

The text tells us that it was not good for Adam to be alone, the only thing in the creation that God calls "not good."

The aspect of naming: to give names to something was an indication of having "dominion over." For example, Reuben changed the names of the cities of the Amorites after he had conquered them. So, Adam is functioning as God's representative.

Nakedness - This suggests that they are at ease with one another without any fear of exploitation or awareness of the potential for evil. Basically, they are naive and oblivious to evil, not knowing where the traps lie.

III. SIN'S ENTRANCE INTO THE HUMAN RACE (3:1-24)

This is the key chapter in the trilogy. All that man had in the garden is now lost in the fall. Now there is curse, necessitating the regaining of "blessing."

A. The Temptation Account (3:1-7)

1. The Tempter's Advantage

There is a subtle word play between 2:25 and 3:1:

- the couple are naked (עֲרֻמִּים - *'ārūmmîm*)

- the serpent is crafty (עָרוּם - *'ārûm*)

The point is significant: in their nakedness, they were oblivious to evil, not knowing where the traps lay. On the other hand, Satan did and would use his craftiness to take advantage of them.

2. The Temptation Process

- a. The temptation comes in disguise (the form of a serpent).
- b. The temptation is subtle and "sneaky," not a blatant appeal to sin.
- c. Satan attacks the point of weakness by going to the woman (the command had been given directly to the man).
- d. Satan begins by finding out what she knows about God's Word (vs 1).
- e. Satan discovers her lack of understanding:
 - 1) She adds to the prohibition ("touch it")
 - 2) She weakens the penalty

God said "surely die" (with inf. absolute)

Eve merely said "die"
 - 3) Eve fails to see the full extent of the provision

God said, "freely eat" (i.e., all you want - inf. absolute)

Eve merely said "eat"
- f. Satan openly challenges the Word of God:
 - a. He lies about the penalty (you won't die)

Point: you can sin and get away with it.
 - b. He suggests God has a bad motive - wants to keep something from them.
 - c. Appeals to her on higher motives - "like God"
- g. He brings the woman to take her mind off the penalty and depend upon her rationale (follow her impressions rather than her instructions) to consider what she thinks are the benefits. She made "self-fulfillment" her goal.

3. Result

The promise of divine enlightenment does not come about. They see, but not as they had expected. They are ill at ease with one another (mistrust and alienation or separation) and they are ill at ease with God (fearfully hiding from Him).

4. Message

A solid knowledge of the Word of God is absolutely essential to spiritual victory! [cf. Heb 5:14 – the truth must be put into practice in order for us to mature].

B. The Curse Oracles (3:8-24)

The remainder of the chapter shows the effect of sin: divine punishment and provision in the presence of evil.

The lesson: rebellion brings death, pain, conflict, oppression, and temporal hardship.

The solution: Obey God, confess sin, and He will provide the blessings of life in place of the curse.

This section reveals the new order of existence for mankind which will remain until the eschaton.

1. Confrontation with the LORD (3:8-13)
2. Announcement of the Curse (3:14-19)

- a. The serpent (vv 14-15)

Enmity is mutual hatred. This is a key verse often called the "proto-evangelium" (a first gospel). The seed of the woman would include not only Cain but eventually Christ. Hence, this is a fore view depicting the eventual triumph of Christ over Satan, while bruised on the heel in the process (the cross). Nevertheless, this struggle will continue on throughout Scripture.

- b. The woman (vs 16)

She will be mastered by her husband because she attempted to manipulate or lead him, rather than remaining a complement. [translate: "your desire has been for your husband"]

- c. The man (vv 17-19)

Adam is left to scratch out a livelihood in pain, and death will be his end. His work will be a sorrowful plight in that he must strive against obstacles, suffer and die.

3. Provision for the New Order (3:20-24)

The main element here is the provision of the garments of skin which presupposes animal sacrifice. Their attempts to clothe themselves (3:7) are rejected; only God's provision will do. The couple is now acquainted with animal sacrifice, learning God's way of dealing with their sin problem. There must be the substitution of an innocent life for their sinful life.

IV. THE SPREAD OF GODLESS SOCIETY (4:1-26)

The disobedience of Adam and Eve is not a finished story. Sin is a cancer that spreads quickly to each succeeding generation. The doctrine of depravity is at work (Rom 5)!

A. Cain and Abel (4:1-15)

In these two children of the first couple, we see that depravity is transmitted and leads to the degeneration of society. This illustrates the advancement of sin!

Yet this passage must also be seen in its worship context. Here are two individuals who have come before YHWH to worship Him, yet there is something lacking in the worship of Cain. These two brothers are archetypes of the two kinds of people in a worship context. This is an important lesson for the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt as well as for us today.

The problem with Cain's offering is not entirely clear. The main point is that Cain just shows up . . . simply discharging a duty. He brings something of his grain. Abel, on the other hand, is said to have brought the firstlings of his flock, i.e., he has high regard for the LORD. He is going out of his way to please God, and this is the approach of faith (cf. Heb 11:4). There is a lack of faith on Cain's part and this shows up in his response to rejection (namely, anger). He is

envious of the one who is blessed by God, and this leads to murder. His lack of faith evidences itself in at least four ways:

- 1) envy of God's dealings with the righteous
- 2) murderous acts
- 3) denial of responsibility
- 4) refusal to accept the punishment

There are many lessons that could be learned from this story, but the main appeal is to come by faith before God and sacrifice before Him, going out of the way to please Him. This kind of worship and obedience receives the blessing of God, even if met with persecution from the world. The rebellious, on the other hand, must not give way to the corrupt inner nature (in which sin works). They must do right or sin will pounce upon them to destroy them (that is the desire of sin).

B. The Spread of Civilization (4:16-26)

With Cain, we saw sin transmitted; in this section, we see its spread throughout society. Here is society that rebels against God and leaves the land of blessing in angry defiance of His laws and sacrifices. Interestingly, they prosper . . . but only in a worldly sense. They are little aware that sin is "snowballing" and causing degeneration. They are the losers. With Lamech, we even meet a man boasting of his sin! Furthermore, he goes on to demand greater leniency in the vengeance that might come his way than even Cain would dare ask for.

Note that Lamech is the 7th generation in Cain's line, while Enoch is the 7th in Seth's. One is the epitome of wickedness as seen in murder, while the other "walked with God."

The chapter closes with a brief note about Seth's line: "then men began to call upon the name of the LORD." The point is not that every Sethite was godly, but that faith could be found in the world back then. The alternative to following the debaseness and decay of society is to call on the LORD . . . to seek His grace! This is the ray of hope in the midst of a deteriorating life.

V. INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 5:1—11:26

This unit covers four *tôlêdôt* sections, spanning the genealogy of Adam to the appearance of Abram. Basically, this serves to complete the picture of the deterioration of the race, paving the way for the necessity of God's divine program to elect Abram as His instrument to create a nation that will bring blessing to the world. Without God's divine intercession, the race only degenerates and moves further away from blessing! Even a "new beginning" does not solve the dilemma. To remove the wicked from the earth is not the answer. With sin left in the heart of the righteous, there is still the potential for degeneration. We are being prepared to see Abraham, the man for whom obedience worked through faith and separation to God.

A. Despair from Adam to Noah (5:1—6:8)

This section falls into two parts, one tracing the line of Seth from Adam to Noah, and the other a "bizarre event" involving the "sons of God." Both call attention to man's despair under sin and curse, demanding some act from God. The climax is God's intense displeasure over man's existence.

1. The Line of Seth (5:1-32)

At first glance, this appears as a boring genealogy, but it actually is a theological commentary. Once again we are reminded of man's original state by the phrase in 5:2

"and He blessed them." But following this blissful note, there follows a sad and despairing chorus throughout the chapter with the words "and he died." Over and over, we are made to read these words, and we are brought to the realization that death reigned during this entire period. Despite the rise of civilization and cultural progress, man cannot escape the curse of death because of Adam's sin. He dies! This is tied in with the statement in 5:3 that Adam's son was "*in his own likeness, according to his image,*" the point being that the nature is being carried on with the capacities and qualities of the father being transmitted to the son through natural reproduction. Furthermore, man's heart is weighed down with his harsh plight for which he cries for "rest" (5:29).

Yet the chapter does provide a ray of hope for the human race. There is one man who does not die . . . Enoch, and that because he walked with God. So, against the despair of the curse, death is not the final fate. With the progress of revelation and the coming of Christ, this idea matures! Enoch is a lesson to others:

he does not merely live - he walks with God
 he does not simply die - God takes him

The phrase "he walked with God" is an expression for the progressive growth in fellowship and obedience that results in divine favor.

2. The Climax of Wickedness (6:1-8)

All of mankind cringes from the sting of curse and death. The Sethites moan their plight. Now in 6:1-8, certain elements of society endeavor to escape their fate. This vain attempt only testifies to the wickedness of man, in regard to which God has valid reason to bring judgment. Not only is death the inescapable outcome, but the intercession of God in judgment must be reckoned with.

This passage seems to look at man's vain attempt to circumvent the destiny of death (attain immortality) and achieve some sort of divinity (Satan's continual lie that man can be like God; cf. Gen 3:5). The interpretation of the "sons of God" is much debated, but seems to involve some sort of sexual perversion between demonic beings and women (cf. 1 Pet 3:19,20; Jude 6). Ross suggests that these were fallen angels who left their habitation and inhabited bodies of human despots and warriors, who in turn had immoral relations with women.³ Their unusual offspring (6:4) supports such a thesis. However, the product is neither divine nor free of death. These children are not god-kings but mere flesh who die like all other members of the human race. Man has violently overstepped his bounds, and the Lord's commentary is a summation of Gen 1—11, "*The wickedness of man is great on the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually.*"

Yet, God finds a man to bestow favor on (חֵן is the basic Hebrew word for "grace" - the unmerited favor of God given to man who deserves the opposite). Consequently, he and his family walked with God, separating themselves from a doomed world. It is the recipient of grace who escapes judgment to achieve immortality. As Israel entered the promised land, they need not fear such claims of men as being of divine origin (cf. Num 13:31-33; Deut 9:2). From God's dealing with the generation of Noah, we learn that for

³ Allen Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 181-83. Cf. Waltke, *Genesis*, 115-117.

God to bring about His theocratic kingdom of blessing, judgmental destruction of the wicked must occur!

B. New Beginning with Noah (6:9—9:29)

The detestable wickedness of man brings a catastrophic judgment from God as well as a fresh beginning. The curse motif (with the destruction of the human race) continues, but now the blessing motif comes more into play with the redemptive provision for Noah's family and the new covenant with Noah. The way of open rebellion to God ends in judgment, yet God is able to offer a provision (the ark) to those who are the recipients of His grace. Unmistakably, God is the judge of the world.

1. World Judgment at the Flood (6:9—8:19)

a. Commission to Build the Ark and Preserve Life (6:9—7:5)

The story of the flood is in many ways a parallel episode to Genesis 1—2:

- 1) As the dry land appeared from the receding waters of Gen 1, so here the waters abated until the ark came to rest on Ararat.
- 2) Noah is also commissioned to be fruitful and multiply.
- 3) Dominion over animals is called for (although with fear).
- 4) Food is provided with the limitation of shedding human blood.
- 5) Noah plants a garden in contrast to Adam and Eve who were in the garden.

One should not miss the play on words in Gen 6:14 involving the covering (כִּפֶּר) of the ark with pitch (כִּפָּר). In Israel's ritual, atonement (כִּפֹּרֶת = mercy seat) would become a major part of the activities.⁴ To be under blood is the refuge of the Christian.

b. The Flood Judgment (7:6-24)

Many ancient pagan accounts testify to the validity of a universal flood (see notes for Session 2).⁵ The flood story is a major account in Scripture, referred to in many places. Of course, it underscores again that YHWH is the Lord over creation and that His creatures are accountable to Him. The certainty of eventual judgment for the wicked is a major lesson, and the flood story stands as a timeless warning to the wicked that God will not let their sin go unnoticed (see 2 Pet 3). For one

⁴ There should be some caution about these similar terms, as they could be different words that happen to have the same root letters. See *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the OT* for details (vol I, pp 493-95).

⁵ Though skeptics and critical scholars discount the universality of the flood, this is a reasonable conclusion. We should keep in mind that this was not merely an extensive flood that prompted a "moralistic tale." Rather, the biblical flood account was a major judgment of God upon sinful man. Benware points out other arguments for a universal flood:

"The fact that the Flood lasted for more than a year (something not true of local floods) indicates that Noah's Flood engulfed the whole earth. Furthermore, the statement of Genesis that all the high mountains were covered by more than twenty feet of water dictates a flood that is not confined to a local area (7:19-20). Even the building of an ark at all and the gathering of animals to it makes little sense unless the Flood was worldwide" (Paul Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 33).

generation of sinners to die serves to remind all future generations of the coming wrath of God.

For the believer (the grace recipient) the ark is God's provision for escaping the waters of judgment, just as our refuge in Christ is the provision for Christians to avoid the judgment of the lost (cf. John 5:24). Noah sails through the judgment to a new age. The timeless truth remains that the wicked are swept away in judgment and only the righteous elect enter into the new age of rest, the kingdom. Good will ultimately triumph over evil.

c. The Ending of Judgment (8:1-19)

The statement in 8:4 that "*the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat*" has more intent than one may gather at first notice. This is a continuation of the "rest" motif. Not only did the ark physically land on the mountain, but the event was a new beginning with blessing (9:1).

2. The New Start (8:20—9:29)

a. Provision in the New World (8:20—9:17)

1) Noah's First Act (8:20-22)

Upon leaving the ark, Noah's first act is to sacrifice to the LORD of the best that he had. This underscored to Israel that a redeemed people are a worshipping people.

2) New Instructions for Noah (9:1-7)

As with Adam, Noah is given instructions on how to act in this "new world." In particular, a provision is made in regard to murder to protect the sanctity of life. By this, human government is brought in for the new order; man is responsible to ensure justice regarding the killing of one man by another. The lesson to be learned: human law was necessary for the stability of life in the new order, and wickedness cannot go unchecked as it had before. This concept would be foundational to the new nation of Israel coming under the Law at Sinai.

3) God's Covenant with Noah (9:8-17)

The obligation that God took upon Himself to never again destroy the world with a flood is solemnized by a covenant which is intended for the stability of nature. The sign of this covenant, the rainbow, is a perpetual reminder that God always keeps His promise of grace to the human race. This whole area of covenant-keeping and promise-keeping would be very instructional to Israel coming out of Egypt. God always upholds His end of a covenant!

b. Oracle of Noah (9:18-29)

In this episode, we have Noah in a state of nakedness (contrast Adam's nakedness) and drunkenness, a tragedy in light of his opportunity to start a new creation. The story is really concerned with Canaan, for he was the ancestor of the Canaanites.⁶

⁶Cf. Allen Ross, "The Curse of Canaan," *BibSac* 137:547 (Jul-Sep 1980).

The act which Ham commits probably involves no more than a breach of family respect and dignity, wherein the sanctity of the family was destroyed and the strength of the father was made a mockery.

Rather than being an unfair judgment on Canaan, the "curse of Canaan" is really prophetic of the nation that will come from Ham through Canaan. Obviously, this has in mind the Canaanites (whom Israel was to dispossess upon entering "the land"). They would be a people of moral abandonment, enslaved by drunken debauchery. The moral issues faced by Noah's sons would later be faced by those who had to confront an immoral Canaanite society: righteous men will act with modesty and integrity in the face of immoral depravity! Otherwise, they will be assimilated by a society lacking moral respect.

So, this oracle cursing Canaan is meant to prepare Israel for inheriting "the land," in effect laying a foundation for Israel's foreign policy. As a prelude to Israel's expansion and possession of blessings, Canaanites will have to be dispossessed of their place.

C. Repopulation But Continual Decay (10:1—11:9)

This *tôlêdôt* section answers the question of what became of the sons of Noah. They were fruitful and multiplied, but they do not result in obedience to God. Quite to the contrary, they move to deterioration much like the descendants of Adam had. Yet this tracing of the lives is different in that no ray of hope is provided.

To understand this section, the reader must realize that 11:1-9 precedes 10:1-32 chronologically. First, we are confronted with a picture of the nations hopelessly scattered across the face of the earth in rebellion and confusion, warring with one another and with God. When we ask the question of how this came about, we are given the answer through the story of the tower of Babel in 11:1-9.

The picture is bleak! Where is man headed? Left to himself, he only degenerates and rebels against His Creator. What is the way to blessing? With this section, we are well-prepared for the divine program in Gen 12 and the covenant with Abram. God will choose a man out of that scattered mass of nations and begin to build his own nation for a channel of blessing to the world. This section is the pivot to the book, preparing us for the patriarchal events.

1. Repopulation and Formation of Nations (10:1-32)

This section emphasizes the development of those nations that were of primary importance to Israel within the overall structure of the Table.⁷ The author's concern is very akin to the message of the book, particularly as he is preoccupied with the Canaanites in the land of promise. The table, then, is connected with the fulfillment of God's promise to bless Israel as a nation in that land, and to bless those nations that bless her, and curse those who are antagonistic to her. Shem is mentioned last, since the bulk of the Old Testament is concerned with the line of Shem—from Shem comes Abram, through whom God will make His covenant to bless mankind.

2. The Dispersion of Nations (11:1-9)

⁷Allen Ross, "The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 - Its Structure," *BibSac* 137:548 (Oct-Dec 1980) and 138:549 (Jan-Feb 1981).

This passage explains how the nations speak different languages in spite of their common origin and how they came to be spread abroad.⁸ The action centers around rebellion to God's instructions.

a. The Sin

The divine purpose in 9:1 was to move into the earth and fulfill God's original plan. Instead, we find mankind coming together to unite. The problem was not in building a city, but in the striving for unity, security, and social immortality (making a name) in defiance of God's desire for them to replenish the earth. So the sin exhibits itself in an immense pride reflected by open rebellion against God and an independence of God. They want their own "name" (i.e., reputation)!

b. The Divine Punishment

The punishment centers on the language that united the people, not simply the city. The present number of languages that form national barriers is a monument to sin.

c. Divine Prevention

To make a name for themselves (i.e., a reputation) and achieve unity is evaluated by God as being a great potential for evil. Their unity is not based in godliness and faith, but in a defiant effort to have a reputation distinct from the Creator. God knows that the apostasy of the human spirit would only lead to greater evil (recall 6:1-8) and the worst situation possible for the race. Thus, God frustrates their communication (forcing them to separate), and clarifies that nationalism is His will as long as sin is in the world.

D. Noahic Covenant Traced Through Shem to Abram (11:10-26)

Like 5:1—6:8, this is a transition section. It is preparatory for the call of Abram in that it connects the lineage of Abram back to Shem, the blessed son of Noah. The choice is narrowed from Shem (who received the blessing) to Abram, the recipient of blessings of prosperity and posterity. God has not left the world to a divided population under the curse without hope. Note that 10 generations are involved from Shem to Abram. Note also the absence of the phrase "and he died." The stress is no longer on death but on life and expansion.

⁸Allen Ross, "The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9," *BibSac* 138:550 (Apr-Jun 1981).