

Free - Take One

Shaqah

10th
YEAR

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
Colossians 2:8*

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Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

We touched last time on Genesis 9:28; but in our study, we did not actually cover the last two verses of chapter 9. This is because verses 28 & 29 of chapter 9 are very much connected to the genealogy which picks back up in chapter 11 verse 10. Instead of telling us how old Noah was when he begat Shem, and then how long Noah lived begetting sons and daughters, verse 28 tells us how long Noah lived after the flood. There is no mention of Noah begetting any more children. Verse 29 simply tells us what all the days of Noah were. When we get to Shem in chapter 11 verse 10, we get back to that more typical genealogy rundown where we are told how old Shem is when he begets the son which leads down the line to the next important figure in the Bible's account, which is Abram. This is done in much the same way chapter 5 brought us down to Noah.

What broke the chain of so and so begat so and so and then lived so many years, was the flood event. Now, on this side of the flood there is another major event, and it comes about much quicker after the ark than the flood came after man's fall into sin. In many ways, it confirms that man is intent on a certain path. Even though the flood gives man the opportunity to see his mistakes while also getting the chance to start all over again, he chooses much of the same things he chose before. Man can not blame God for the idea that, in inexperience, man fell into a mess with no opportunity to get out!

The next major event would not just involve one main character which God worked through, such as Noah or Abraham. The next major event is the reason why there is a genealogy which leads us down to a single important figure who, once again, was given a specific

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task by God. For us to understand this next event, we need to understand there was a growth of human population on the earth, and then the event took place. The Tower of Babel was not just the culmination of the entire human population's direction from day one when they stepped off the ark. It came about because of decisions which were made as man began to populate, and the idea came forth as man's solution to the way things were headed. These facts are told us in chapter 10 by breaking away from the specific genealogy, and instead shows us the way man, as a whole, developed.

Now again, verse 29 of chapter 9 confirms to us, Noah was not a part of these new developments. Noah did not continue to beget children in the 350 years he lived after the flood. He also did not establish himself as the ruler of the world. He allowed his children their freedom just as God allows, and they made their own choices in spite of the instructions a righteous man such as Noah would have given! Thus, what we are given in Genesis chapter 10 is a catalog of human history post-flood which leads off with all three of Noah's sons. The fact our population starts again from only one family, in a like manner as it all began in the Garden of Eden, shows us what a bottleneck, of sorts, human history went through. However, man quickly begins to populate once more and a bit faster, due to

the fact Noah and his wife already had three sons with wives who came with them on the ark.

Some will say it's a fact that this list in Genesis chapter 10 is not a catalog going from oldest to youngest, as it relates to Noah's sons. They will make this argument on the basis that Genesis chapter 9 verse 24 says, after Noah woke up he knew, "...what his younger son had done unto him." (speaking of Ham) Some say the word "younger" could also be translated into "youngest." This may very well be the case, but what is more solid is the idea Japheth is the oldest. Genesis 10:21 calls Japheth the "elder," in reference to Shem; we know for sure that Shem is younger than Japheth. From the verse concerning Ham, it would certainly seem Ham is not the oldest, so he too must be younger than Japheth. From all this, we believe Japheth is the oldest, then Shem is the next, and Ham is, in fact, the youngest. However, we should keep in mind that in the proceeding verses, we see over and over the sons' of Noah are listed as, Shem, then Ham, then Japheth. Because we know, at the very least, that Japheth is older than Shem, we see they are not laid out in order of age at those times. Regardless of what anyone may or may not believe, it is clear these lists are laid out, and it would seem to be intentionally, without concern for who is oldest or youngest. The best explanation for

this is that the sons' names are laid out in all places in order of their importance - or maybe we should say their time line importance - to the story ahead.

When we look at the family catalog we are given in chapter 10, we see the order mixed around once more in that Japheth and Shem are reversed in the order mentioned. How does this line up with the importance theory? In a simple list of the three sons, Shem would be of most importance because it would be out of his family God's chosen nation would come. The spiritual importance of Shem's family was even prophesied by Noah in chapter 9. Ham, then, would be of next importance because it would be a part of his family which, among other things, would be displaced by God's chosen nation as the holders of the land God chose for His purpose. Because Israel does not completely follow the instructions of God in that they were to drive out Ham's family from among them, they suffer the consequences of being affected by the false religious and other bad practices those people held. (Num. 33:50-56, Ps. 106:34-48) God said this is what would happen if Israel failed to do what He asked; and thus, Ham's family plays a very up close and personal role in the entire main story line the Bible was given to insure we understand. The nations Japheth's family becomes does

not significantly enter the picture of this story line until much later on. (Dan. 8:5-7)

When we get to chapter 10 and we see the order changed, it is because Japheth's family is important, and will play a role. However, because they, as a people, will not be much of a factor until later on, we are simply told who they became as nations, by way of telling us what area of the world they populated. Very few individuals are mentioned, because individuals are why genealogy lists - such as in Genesis chapter 5, and later in chapter 11 - are given. This catalog in chapter 10 is about something different; and the fact this son here or that son there may, for a time, have been or developed into a significant tribe, does not matter to our story so much when it comes to Japheth. What does matter is that we know those nations which exist in the area of the world we see enter our story later on are, in fact, the descendants of Japheth. It is for this future reference, Genesis chapter 10 starts by telling us where Japheth's descendants went, and that they did, in fact, become specific people on the earth.

After taking care of that, the information moves on to Ham. Why Ham? Because next, the information is setting the stage for Israel to appear on the

scene. Remember, long before there is a nation of Israel, Abraham is called out of his family area to go into the promised land and live among Ham's family, who are strangers to him. (Gen. 12:1-3, 17:1-8) Ham's family plays a key role for a very long time. Thus, several of his family line are mentioned specifically, as well as some national names which we find directly in later events. (Gen. 23:1-7, Ex. 33:1-3) It's only after setting the stage of what and where Ham's family went and became that the information moves on to Shem's family and who they become. Putting Shem last not only gives us a clear picture of the family which the history will begin to focus on in later chapters, but it also takes us into the information which begins in chapter 11 verse 10, where we pickup again on that very familiar, individual genealogy list.

On that point, it should be said again - the families which lived before the flood are irrelevant on this side of the flood. This fact we have covered in that it's told to us in chapter 9 verses 18 & 19. However, it's told again at the end of chapter 10 in verses 31 & 32. Family groups established before the flood would carry no weight in how nations came to be and the world moved forward after the flood. Chapter 10 verse 1 makes a fact clear which we touched on last time as well, and that is the fact: we know only eight people boarded the ark. The children born to the three sons

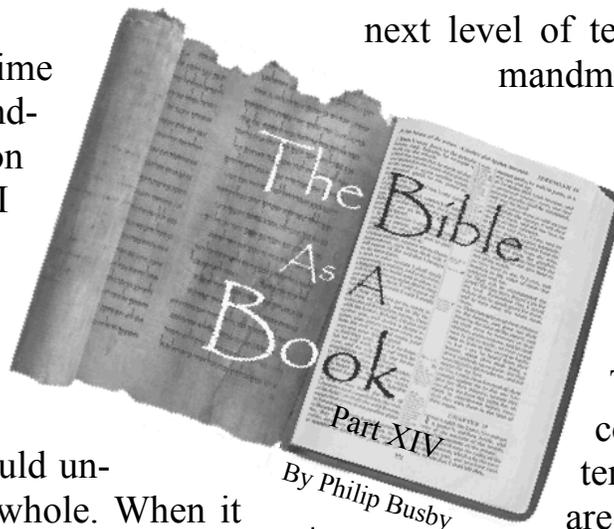
of Noah and his wife, were born after the flood! Only the choices of those who survived the flood on the ark and those whom they gave birth to after the pre-flood world had been washed away, shaped the world we know today!

Verse 2 is where we start that family tree, catalog-like rundown, which is conveyed on our chart for this segment. (See chart on page 8) As we have just been discussing, this catalog begins with Japheth. Japheth has seven sons; and in the next couple of verses, we are told the sons of two of those seven. Now, all through this catalog, we will see this. Once again, we are not talking about what is there as much as what is not! Two, and only two of Japheth's sons are listed as having sons, but this does not mean the rest of the seven had no sons or children of any kind. This is where we really begin to understand, this catalog is not here to give us a complete family tree. The names and generations of people we are given in the Bible are one of the most complained about things in all the Word, especially by those who are just beginning to study. For help on that matter, let me simply say that as one starts out studying the Word, you do not need to attempt to memorize the lists of names you find, or sweat the fact you have trouble pronouncing them. If we pay attention, we will find that at least some

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We talked last time about the Ten Commandments being an expansion of the two greatest, and I know we have discussed this many times already. However, it is a point which bears repeating because it sets the tone for how we should understand the Bible as a whole. When it comes to the direct teaching for righteous living, which the Bible gives us, we must understand when Jesus said all the law and prophets hung on the two greatest commandments, He was not just giving us a helpful way to look at things. Jesus was being literal in every way. Loving God with everything we are is the foundation of why we were created; and if it's not where our heart's desire is, we just are not going to make it! Thus, everything else in the Word of God is designed to point us back to that truth as well as teach us how to accomplish the commandment. If we think there is any weight in following any other commandment without loving God being the reason we do it, the only reason you can argue you're not just wasting your time is that the second commandment tells us we should love others!

As we have at least touched on before, even the silver commandment is about showing us how to fulfill the first. Loving your neighbor is the second commandment because if we follow any commandments for any reason other than love for God, it should be in love for our fellowman, who must share this universe with us. This is why the



next level of teaching is the Ten Commandments. These basic principles we must have and strive to live by if we are going to have any hope of pulling out of the nose dive into sin humanity in general is in. This is exactly why we cover the fact that long after the Ten Commandments are given, and the children of Israel are about to enter the promised land, Moses takes the time to stop and remind Israel about how much of a first priority the ten are above and beyond all the other instructions God has given them!

In Deuteronomy chapter 5, Moses gathers the children of Israel and reminds them of that day when God put forth the foundation of His Words which they were to be the keepers of. Moses reminds them that, "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,..." Deuteronomy 5:4 Moses repeats the Ten Commandments and then he reminds them of another fact, "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Deuteronomy 5:22 The children of Israel could say what they wanted about the rest of the written laws which had been given to Moses later on, but these Ten Commandments they heard with their own ears directly from God. In hearing these ten, the children of Israel did not become a nation, but a multitude of witnesses that these Ten

Commandments are the fundamentals of life. God found it necessary to speak these ten directly to the entire congregation and not just to one man as He did with so much of the rest. However, these ten comprise the whole of what God felt this way about. These ten God spoke directly to Israel and nothing more!

All this shows us these ten were given not to Israel as part of the Law which made them an official nation, but as laws to live by in order to become the chosen nation God wanted them to be. Whether Jew or non-Jew, these ten should set a foundation for our lives if we hope to have order in this world, and especially in order to be what God is calling each of us as individuals to be! This is why we started this study from the outside of the target by talking about the Old versus New Testament issue, and worked our way in. Everything contained in the rest of the Bible is an attempt to draw us to that first and greatest commandment. If we are clear on that issue, then we can move back out from the target's center and gain understanding, not only as to why the other commandments exist, but how and why they are important to our lives before God!

When we study and meditate upon the Ten Commandments, we should be able to see clearly how they are an expanded look at the way we are to love God with everything we are. We love by not only caring about the things which He put in place which respect Him directly, such as the Sabbath, not taking His name in vain, not making graven images, and putting Him first; but we also respect God by respecting the way He set up our existence and interactions with others. This takes us directly into our next discussion

about the Torah as a whole, why it exists, and thus why we have a Bible of any thickness to hold in our hands.

Now, if the Ten Commandments are so important and the bulk of the Law which was laid out for all humans regardless of whether Jew or non-Jew, why did God go on to give such an extensive law directly to Israel, and then tell us so much about how that unfolded? Well, it might have been possible for God to give just the first two and greatest commandments to Adam and Eve as well as those who followed them, if man had never taken of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. These two could have been the basis for all humanity; and from there God would have simply led and taught each individual how to be righteous according to the path they desired to take, and at their own pace. In other words, the two greatest commandments could have simply been a way to teach or describe for people what the human purpose in life is. Everything else could have flowed very organically from there. After man fell into sin, by taking and thus, becoming responsible for the knowledge of good and evil, and thus, removed from the Tree of Life, it may have been possible to only need the expansion of the first two by giving the Ten Commandments. This truth has a lot to do with why they are the Law for all men, not just the Jewish nation. Each of us still have the knowledge of good and evil passed down to us. What those who hold and fight for the truth of God in this world need are these written confirmations that the truth is the truth, and not just relative or in the eye of the beholder.

The problem is that not long into the time of man's history - post the Garden of Eden -

not only do we see one man violating the sixth commandment by murdering his brother, we see that same man going forth to build a city. (Gen. 4:16-17) Because of this, each man did not just go on from the Garden of Eden, living their lives as individuals. Man came up with concepts which would affect human existence as a whole. This kind of living not only took us to the time of the flood where God determined the end of all flesh had come before Him; (Gen. 6:13) we see even after the flood, God had to put a stop to the fact people being all of one language and desiring to build a city and a name, would totally endanger people serving the God who created them. (Gen. 11:1-6) Man proved and continues to prove, he is stuck on the concept. Under these circumstances, God would not leave us with only the direct written instructions of life's fundamental principles by giving us the Ten Commandments, but God would also set an example for us to see how our man-made system should be run!

I know some of you are thinking, we have already covered the above facts, more than once, in this study. However, I wish to make not only the point that these facts are important to our understanding, but also a point which is key to our next discussion. I will start that discussion by simply asking a question. How do we know the historical facts we keep coming back to about the fall, the flood, the Tower of Babel, etc.? The answer to that is simple; we have the book of Genesis!

As we take our journey from the center of the target back out to the perimeter, we come very quickly back to the Torah as a whole.

Just to refresh or reemphasize the facts: Torah means law, and it refers to the first five books of the Bible. These books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Now, if you know much about the Bible at all, you can easily see why Leviticus is considered law. One should not have much trouble seeing Deuteronomy as containing a great deal of law as well. Of course, it's in the book of Exodus that we see many of the laws which established Israel; and even Numbers tells us a lot about the precepts which would establish Israel as a true nation. However, there is Genesis; and this first book would not be considered, by many, a book containing a large portion of law, as much as it is a pure history book.

As some Christian organizations have attempted to break down the Bible into the categories they feel are most appropriate for teaching the Bible, they often break them down into categories such as, history, law, prophets, poetic, or the like. This may be all fine and good; but another fact I have pointed out in this study is that better than attempting to reinvent the wheel, we really should simply look at the way the Jewish nation, the Word of God was given to, classifies the books. The Jewish classification may not seem as appropriate to some as the predominate "Christian" way of categorizing them, but this is because of a few very simple truths. First, non-Jews have not studied the Scriptures for as long as the Jews have. Second, like it or not, the Word was given to, thus written by, Jews. This brings us to the third point, and the one which may be of most importance to our discussion here. Because of facts one and two, the Jews are the ones who understand how, when, and

thus why, each book came about. They are far clearer on the origin of each book as it relates to history than non-Jews are. Because they are the people who have lived and are still living the circumstances most of the Word focuses on, they understand them not just for what the books say, but why the words were written in the first place!

This is really what we have been driving at in this part of our discussion thus far. History is a big part of what we need. We only know the historical facts which we continue to discuss because we have the Bible. The Ten Commandments, and even the two greatest, can be accused of being a list of do's and don'ts. It could be said the knowledge man was instilled with by taking of The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is basically the same in many ways. This is why Adam and Eve immediately realized they were responsible for their nakedness, but did not understand exactly what to do about it. Both the Old and New Testaments make the point very clear that we are going to be saved from the death our sin brings, not because our purity and righteousness will ever warrant salvation, but because God is a God of grace! (Eph. 2:8) "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Romans 4:8

Whether we attempt to follow God in our lives or not, the wages of our sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life for those who choose to diligently seek Him. (Rom. 6:22-23, Heb. 11:6) For those who desire, God has said we should walk the path He intended from the start, which is that we learn and grow to be righteous and holy through having a relationship with Him. This is faith! We started in innocence, not knowing sin; now we walk in responsibility for our ac-

tions, making mistakes all along the way. However, God is not looking at how overall righteous or unrighteous we are at any given moment; God is looking at whether we are open to His voice and the instructions it gives, and whether we care or don't care to strive at every moment to follow those instructions. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17

Really nothing has changed on God's side since the day He created us. All along the way, God has been looking at the choices we make, not just as individuals but also as humanity in general; and He has been interacting on the basis of what those who desire Him would need in order to find righteousness and grow in their faith. If the Bible was a list of do's and don'ts, it would be nothing more than what our conscious tells us, other than that confirmation thing. We would never gain much ground, because we would simply be running around like Adam and Eve were after they took of the fruit. Even now, as our best guesses often create the same pathetic results such as they did for Adam and Eve, we also have their propensity to simply run and hide from God. (Gen. 3:7-11) This is the exact opposite of our purpose in life. Again, we know this because Genesis tells us Adam and Eve's story, as well as the crucial stories which follow. It is because of Genesis that we understand God had a much easier path set out for us than the one we took. After we fell to sin, we see the love of God in that He did not simply leave us to live in this condition forever. God took care of sin by separating us from the Tree of Life. (Gen. 3:22-24) Thus, we all know we are going to die someday, and there is nothing we can do about that, so there is no need to sweat it! This may seem like a bad thing,

but in reality it's a good thing, because it frees us to live for and seek a relationship with God instead of feeling like we need to hide from Him due to our many faults which we currently don't know what to do about. Jesus further solidifies this truth by coming and sacrificing Himself.

So, while the Law is called Law, we see clearly we lack an understanding about why it was given if we only see it as history. We should not say Genesis is a historical book, we should understand God's Law is not the same exact thing we think of as governmental law. God's Law is not simply about crime and punishment. God's Law is about saving us from the laws of sin and death which we can do nothing about by simply trying to be a "good person!" What the Bible does then is not give us a list of do's and don'ts which if not met will kill us. The Bible attempts to teach us what we need to know to be what God created us to be. This all starts with the understanding of how we were created, which is not only where the book of Genesis begins, but also the events for which the book is named!

What we are seeing in most all the Bible is not a separation of laws and history books, but a story of our history as humans living in this universe, and how our choices have changed our walk with God. Along the way, we see how God interacted with the individuals who came before us, and this shows us how we have come to the state we find ourselves in today. We know where leaving humans to certain devices gets us. We know where the cumulative will of man wants to and even will take us. We also see what God must do when we get to certain points, such as we did at the very acute times of the flood and the Tower of Babel.

Throughout it all, we see those things we would directly label as law in those things God specifically pointed out to us, in order to confirm to us there is black and white, not just a gray way to live. Because the cumulative effect and desire of mankind is a downhill one, God also implemented examples of righteousness based on the ideas and direction man's free will has taken him so we could be without excuse.

While the nation of Israel at its core may run on laws which very much are a list of do's and don'ts, the written Word God gave to Israel is not just a set of do's and don'ts overall. The Jews hold a vital and unique handbook which every last human should avail themselves of! The core of that handbook is the Torah. These five books are the history which shows us not just why we are no longer living in peace in a perfect world created by the same God Who created us, just the way He planned it, but also why we are so very far from that reality, walking the path we currently walk and facing the struggles we currently face. The Torah is a power packed portion of the Word! The Bible, as believers in Jesus see it, contains the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. At the same time, the Hebrew Bible contains the Torah, and the Torah contains both the Ten Commandments as well as the two greatest commandments. Beyond that, it is truth that knowledge and what we call technology may increase, but there is nothing about the way humans have chosen to live their lives which the unfolding of events and thoughts to get us where we are, are not covered in these first five books!

This is why we start with a book of Genesis. The word "genesis" in English simply means, "beginning." However, if we

lean more heavily on the Hebrew, the name of this book means, “with which it begins.” This is why it may seem like, to many people, this is just a historical book. While it's true that it is history, it's not a history we live in. It is from whence we came! Because of the situations and choices which occur in the book of Genesis, we are all a very long way from where it all starts by the time we get to the end of just this one book. We live a long way away from a time where God was able to come down and commune directly with men like Cain and Abel. Genesis is not just about the story of creation; it's the story of how we came from a time of innocence where God walked with us in the cool of the evening, to a place where even a set of rules, such as was given to Israel, would only bring God down among a specific people chosen for the purpose; and God would still dwell in a place where only one specific man among those chosen people, out of a dedicated for the purpose of God tribe, out of one specific family lineage among that tribe, could go before the direct presence of God, and only on one specific day of the year, to complete a very specific ceremony. (Lev. 16) Now, that's a genesis!

The book of Genesis covers a solid history of about 2,369 years. I say it is solid history because there are a number of books in the Bible that cover time periods, which overlap the time period(s) other books in the Bible cover. While I & II Samuel are fairly solid history, the books of I & II Chronicles, and I & II Kings go over much of the same information and time period, each giving some differing perspectives and facts at different points. This kind of overlap exists in no greater way than it does with the four

Gospels which begin the New Testament. Books such as Daniel and Esther are history, but they are very focused on just a few stories, or even just one main story, which gives historical information about a particular time, person, and/or place. In doing this, they also often contain the giving of very important information such as prophesy. While you clearly should understand from the rest of the Bible why these people are where they are when the story opens, and why the information given is important to the Bible as a whole, the books themselves do not necessarily pickup where another book left off and end pretty much where another one starts. They simply tell their story and information. It's up to the reader to glean the important information as it stands by itself, while also understanding where the book sets in time. This is why the Bible is not laid out in a chronological format or in a cohesive story like a novel. We should be able to understand the basic chronological order of the Bible, and look at the information given from that perspective. However, we should never forget that these are not a collection of interesting stories. The books of the Bible are vital information along with vital events which took place along the time line of human history as a whole!

Now, the Torah, overall, covers around 2,553 years which is a bit more than a third of all of this universe's history, and just under two hundred years more than the book of Genesis covers all by itself. Thus, I say Genesis is a solid history in that it's the only book which covers the time period it covers. Other than a folktale here and there, it is, throughout the world, the only historical account of most all the time it goes over.

Without it, we would have little to no idea about what happened during much of our early history and certainly not before the flood. The book of Genesis not only starts at the earliest point one can start at, but it also leads to a historical point which will be directly picked up by the next book. By starting us off with the creation of the world, including the first man Adam, and ending with the death of Joseph, who is the great grandson of Abraham, we are given a solid history from the time of God easily being understood as The God of all people, down to the time when God chose a specific people to call His people, so all might learn to serve Him once again. (II Pet. 3:9) In this, Genesis has given us all the information we need to understand why even though the human race started as just one individual (in the man Adam) who clearly knew God, humanity as a whole has come to misunderstand that every individual's purpose is to serve God. We also see how a few specific seed people - if you will - developed into the full grown crop of people needed to be called the chosen nation of God; and it is with that point the next book will begin to more specifically deal!

Now, all five books of the Torah are credited as being written by Moses. This is confirmed in many ways by the very stories they bear. We know from the book of Exodus that there was not a written law for Israel to live by until God gave the one He gave to Moses. Never do we see a dispute about God's Law changing a law or custom the children of Israel already followed. This is because there was simply nothing solid to displace. Of course, we see that when God gives the Law to Moses, it's not just the do's and don'ts but five full books! All these were written by Moses as the Spirit of God gave

them to him. There is only a small portion at the end of the Torah, which is fairly obviously not written by Moses directly, and we will talk about that later as we discuss that book. However, as you look at the book of Genesis as being the first book, we are reminded of the chronological issue we just discussed above. Genesis is not the first part of God's Word to be written down. The Exodus story clearly tells us God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger. (Ex. 31:18, 34:1-28) Even what Moses was told in the early Exodus story was not likely written down until after God showed in doing this, that His written Words are what He intended Israel to hold. God gives what is needed to be given when and in the way it is needed.

Now, many people believe the book of Genesis is not much more than a collection of writings which already existed before Moses. That being said, it's a truth we do not know for certain just how much of the history of man at that point had been written down and maintained in some way. On that point, we want to look at two things. First, the already existing writings thing is speculation; and second, it's not likely. I don't say it's speculation because I desire to be demeaning in any way to those who teach this. It is just a fact that we are never told Moses had any written information about the history of man or his forefathers which he used as a foundation for the Genesis writing. One of the main facts which makes me feel like this idea of already existing written information is a wrong thought, is that it's not the tradition of men to write things down. Long before civilizations like Egypt show us there was an ability to read and write, people were able to do such a thing if they had chosen. Again, we must not think like an evolution-

ist. Man was smart from day one of his existence. In fact, the true scientific evidence (which are those things we can actually observe) points to the fact man is degrading and becoming more basic, not growing and getting smarter. We should understand Adam could have come up with a writing system, and it's possible we would not even be able to decipher it today. That being true, there is little to no evidence man wrote much of anything in the first couple thousand years or so of his existence. This makes it hard to believe Moses was going off a collection of writings in any way.

What we do know from history is that people, even to this day, have held the tradition of verbally passing information down to later generations. Originally, people liked to tell stories verbally, and this may have some to do with brain power as well. It's very possible that earlier men had such good memories that the thought of writing a record on some external physical object just was not a thought which crossed their mind. It is a very obvious truth that verbal communication is much faster and efficient than having to take the time to write things down. Person to person contact is still the way information flows the fastest, and verbal communication would have been fast enough, that for earlier men greatly relying on some other system would likely never have made practical sense.

Later on, and more and more, people started writing things down for the express purpose that the information would be remembered. This is why writing is first the instrument of rulers and kings, more than anything. Knowledge is power; and by writ-

ing things down, we can build libraries of power! Writing also gave the opportunity to memorialize the accomplishments of kings. This is the evidence we see the most use of for writing in ancient times. Not only could kings make sure future generations learned about how "great" they were, kings could also embellish. After some time, the writing on a monument was the record; and the only ones who could dispute it were those who said, that's not what my father told me!

This relates to the Word as a whole. People having great memories has to do with why they may not have written things down from day one. However, by the time of Moses, people were beginning to write a number of things, and growing in their ability to do so. There is a game known as the gossip game, where people sit in a circle, and one person starts a certain story or factual information around the circle by telling the person next to them. That person tells the person on the other side of them, and so on until the fact gets all the way around the circle and back to the person who started. This is a game because it is entertaining to see just how much the fact or story has changed in the process of being told from person to person. Moses may have had a fair amount of information which different people had passed down verbally, but God did not want the gossip game effect to interfere with the purity of the history and information He wanted us all to have!

Let's stay in God's Word!

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of the names will mean something specific to us as we grow in God's Word and our understanding of it. However, for the beginner, as well as those who have studied for a long time, it's good if we can focus on the main overall point until we at least grasp that, and not get flustered by the fact there are so many names so hard to pronounce.

The reason only two sons of Japheth's seven sons are told to have sons of their own, and the reason we see this throughout this catalog, is that we are focused here on nation building. It will not be until we get to chapter 11 that we see the story which shows us people's desire to develop empires. However, that idea all grew from some very basic concepts which many people have desired throughout our history. After the flood, some people did go out and simply live their lives, but others would take the conglomeration route. Some would even do exactly what Cain started, in that they would build cities. (Gen. 4:16-17) Whether living in cities or not, many people chose to live in defined groups of one sort or another. The information we are specifically given tells us the important city-building which directly led to the tower. However, the catalog of names is telling us the names of those who formed into groups, which we might best describe as tribes. This leads, once again, to the fact God

put in place a formula with which we can create committed working units of people. In this formula there is a male who is given the responsibility of being the leader, and a female who chooses to stand beside him as his partner. This is the right formula for people who desire to expand the population, because they can choose to expand the unit they are responsible for, through the birth of children.

All that being said, this basic model of the family unit is where the bond of people being confined to work as a continual unit ends. Marriage is not forced upon us; but once we take the vows, marriage is meant to be until death do us part. (Mark 10:1-12) From there, children may or may not be born; but if they are, they become a part of a working unit along with their parents. This is a part of why God gives the commandment that children are to honor their parents. (Ex. 20:12) However, children grow to become adults, and they can choose to go out on their own and take responsibility for themselves. When they do this, they are no longer a direct part of the unit their parents are. They did not take a vow of "till death do us part," and it makes no sense to argue otherwise. What is more directly related to the subject matter at hand, is the fact that because there is the unit of marriage which adults can choose to take on, the Bible says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and

shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

This does not mean a man can no longer listen to his parents, or that he should no longer heed the wisdom of those older and wiser than he is. However, it does mean he is now responsible for the actions of his own family regardless of who he listens to! This brings us to the idea of tribes and nations. Family members can be a great asset. It does not take a village to raise a child, but a village can help if it is filled with good, wise, God-fearing people. This is why a group of true believers should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, and try to help one another. (Heb. 10:23-25, Rom. 15:1) The truth that family members by nature can, and often do, continue to help each other, even after they have divided into singular family units of their own, is the concept from which we get tribes. The most natural thing to see happen if people desire to be with others, is for related family units to stay together and lean on each other's strength and wisdom. There is a natural instinct to be a bit partial to family, and this is part of what the Bible tells us gets turned around as people move further and further from God. “For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her

mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.” Micah 7:6

The building of nations is based on the concept of family groups staying together. This is exactly what we see in the building of Israel. There was a family line from Abraham, through Isaac, to Jacob. Jacob begat the sons from which the twelve tribes grew and got their names. These tribes were to stay together as tribes; and as a whole, they would form a nation of people called by their forefather's God-given name - Israel! When it comes to Israel, we often think of the idea of them being closed to others as only having to do with the concept of not taking on the false religious beliefs of others. While this is the main part of the concept, we see people can join; but those who desire to be a part of the nation of Israel must become a true part of Israel's family. (Ex. 12:48-50, Lev. 19:33-34, 24:22, Num. 15:13-16) This has a lot to do with the fact nations built out of tribes of related people - or more importantly, people who are in agreement with one another - is where God is telling us we should put an end to what people conglomerating into a group becomes. Agreement being important is seen even as we look at Israel. Eventually, God allowed ten tribes to break away and be a nation of their own, separate from Judah and Benjamin, be-

cause that is what they wanted. (I Kin. 12:1-24) Being together in groups is an idea man wants and goes after. The problem is that it is often forced upon people; and if allowed to grow too large, it leaves no chance for those who desire God, to follow Him, or for people to exercise their personal free will on many levels. If we think nations are a good idea, we should consider those words in the book of Micah which tell us this problem can even exist all the way down to our own family becoming our enemy. Mankind developing into nations, and eventually empires, is not God's will. We only see that God ordains governing powers because, especially, if we are going to conglomerate, there should be a mechanism for righteous laws to be enforced among us. (Rom. 13:1-8)

This is why, what we see in the catalog we are given in Genesis chapter 10 is not just that some people conglomerated into specific groups, but that others did not. Those sons which went on to have sons and/or sons of sons who became tribal or national groups are cataloged. Even some direct national names are listed. Those who simply went out and lived their lives without worrying about making a name for themselves, and/or melded into other tribal organizations, do not have listings, or in some cases, not one which goes beyond their name. When it comes to Japheth's sons, only two of his seven sons gave birth to

sons who would form into significant groups. The two sons of Japheth which did this are Gomer and Javan. Gomer begat three sons, and Javan four. These would go on to populate the areas we know as the Gentile areas. According to verse 5, they would divide the land, not among individuals or family units, but among the larger divisions they came to recognize.

This brings us to another issue which will be important to our understanding of how the Tower of Babel came about. The idea of the three sons' families dividing the actual land is looked at by some to be a divine promise of God. They will even tell you, the fact people did not go out into their respective land is why God confounded the languages. While it's true God wanted people to go out into the uttermost parts of the world and enjoy all which He created, it's wrong to even suggest God wanted the later generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth to divide down family, tribal, and national lines! Everyone not being willing or desirous to simply live their lives anywhere they chose across the planet, no matter which son of Noah they were a descendant from, is what sparked the problems which led to the tower being built!

Until next time, Shalom!

