



Week of May 8 Table of Nations¹

Overview:

At some point in our lives, we have to wonder: Why are we here? How did all of this come to be? What are the origins of our universe, our story, and our purpose? In the first eleven chapters of the Genesis, we see a cosmic story unfolding—an epic narrative—of God shaping a good and meaningful world, what went wrong, and how God is redeeming the mess, restoring us to something good. The next several weeks, we will explore new ways to study this narrative and learn how to apply those tools to all of Scripture.

Group Objectives:

- Reflect on this past Sunday’s message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- With the table of nations, we see how Noah’s sons fulfilled God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply.” They fill the earth. As we look at these people and places, we see that they all belong to God and are part of one human people. We see generations, and we recall our own family history and legacy.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We do life together.* “Community” is our middle name. Every person of every generation is wanted, needed, and known. And there’s always room for one more.

Conversation Starters:

- Share a bit of your family’s history for as many generations as you are able to go back. What is a key value of your family that has carried forward from one generation to the next?

Read and Reflect: Bible Study Discussion

We all have a family history, our own family origins. As we learn the names and stories of our ancestors, we get a fuller picture of who we are and where we come from. Genesis 10, the Table of Nations provides a bridge between Noah and his sons and the nations and peoples that span a broad geography. Within this chapter, we see Noah’s family fulfilling God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply,” and they “fill the earth.” It provides a map of the world in terms of where Noah’s sons scattered and lived, providing the world’s first ethnography in an effort to connect nations, linguistic groups, places, and peoples.

¹ This study guide was written by Teresa Baumbach and edited by Dawn Gentry.

This ethnography is incomplete and meant to be representative rather than exact. We have 70 descendants of Noah's sons. Both 7 and 10 are numbers of completeness, so these descendants are meant to be symbolic of the whole world. In Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5, Jacob and his sons, who travel to Egypt and later become Israel, also number 70. They too multiply and fill the earth. "The people of Israel occupy in the plans of Divine Providence a place resembling, on a small scale, that of all mankind; it is a small-scale world, a microcosm similar in form to the macrocosm."²

In Genesis 10, we also see that from the same parents can come both good and bad. In Genesis 9:25-27, we saw Shem's blessing and Canaan's (Ham's) curse. Most of Israel's enemies will come from Canaan's descendants, and we see some of those enemies listed in Genesis 10. Within this listing of Noah's sons and their sons, we get a fuller picture of Israel's origins and how they fit into the broader narrative of God's story.

- **Read Genesis 10**
 - What are some interesting points that you notice as you read this chapter? List them as a group.
- **Read Genesis 10:5, 20, and 31**
 - What is the phrase that's repeated?
 - What does it mean?
 - Why is it significant to the greater narrative of the Israelite people?
- **Read Genesis 10:8-10.** *In these verses, Nimrod is highlighted.*
 - Who is he? Why do you think he is set apart?
 - What is the connection between "mighty warrior" and "mighty hunter"?
 - What does "before the Lord" mean in this context?
- **Read Genesis 10 and Matthew 28:19-20**
 - *As we look at the people and places in Genesis 10, we see they **all** come from God, and **all belong** to God. From our origins, we are ONE human people.*
 - How well do we live out this truth today? How could we do better?
 - In Matthew 28, what does Jesus tell his disciples to do? To whom are they to go?
 - How are we called to follow these same instructions today?

Respond and Pray

- Invite members of the group to share prayer requests.
- Pray: *Loving and merciful God, we thank you for our family and for the generations who have faithfully gone before us. May we continue living out our legacy of faith and pass it on to future generations. We thank you for allowing us to be part of your story. We love you. Amen.*

For further study:

Additional resources, including books, videos, and podcasts, are found at cccomaha.org/origins

² Brown, Raymond Edward, et al. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. Prentice Hall, 1990, p. 17.