

# Ethnicity, Race, and the Bible

## Part IV

# The Table of Nations

- Genesis 10:1-32, is known as the “Table of Nations”
- It is a verbal “map” of the world (*W. Brueggemann, Genesis -91*)
- It is one of two genealogies at the end of the Primeval History

# Primeval History

- Primeval History – First eleven chapters of Genesis
- Distinct from the other “historical” material
- About the origins of the universe
- Universal in nature, timeless in scope (how things came to be and how things are)

# Genealogies in the Primeval History

- Purpose?
- Every genealogy has a purpose...
- Demonstrate the characters are following the command to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1)
- Follow the universal family before the Tower of Babel
- Direct our attention to one family in preparation for Abraham in chapter 12
- 4:1, 4:17ff, 5:1, 10:1ff, 11:10 ff

# Outline of Primeval History

- 1:1-2:4 Creation 1
- 2:4b-3:24 Creation 2
- 4:1-16 Cain and Abel
- 4:17-6:4 Cain's descendants (genealogy)
- 6:5-9:17 Flood Narrative

- 9:18-10:32 Noah's Genealogy
- 11:1-9 Tower of Babel
- 11:10-29 Noah's Genealogy, cont.

# Noah's Genealogy 9:18-10:32

- In a post-flood world
- Three sons – segmented genealogy
- Follows three sons
- Follows the narrative curse of Ham in 9:18-29

- 9:18 ...”Ham was the father of Canaan...”
- Why is this detail given?
- What is the political landscape of the people who are telling this story?

# The Nations...

- Canaanites
- Ishmaelites\*
- Moabites\* and Ammonites\*
- Philistines
- Edomites\*
- Aramaeans\*

- How does Israel depict her neighbors to reflect political realities?
- Who are these people in reality?
- “othering”
- Is this race, politics or both?
- Construction of identity to promote an agenda

# Genesis 10:1-32

- Who gets the most “air-time?”
- Who/what is important to the narrator?

# Tower of Babel

- Why does it happen?
- What is God's response?
- Why do we have different nations?
- Does an event in history change our origins?

# Genesis 11:10-32

- Transition from universal to one family
- Story of Abraham
- Abrahamic 3-fold promise...blessing
- Is it the intention of the promise to restore all nations?

## So what about the Canaanites?

- What is the point of genealogies?
- What is the purpose of origin stories?
- How does an origin story reflect our values?

# Israel's Origin Stories

- Last week: primeval history, Genesis 1-11
- Universal in scope
- How things came to be and how things are
- Asynchronous
- Abraham narrative

- Abraham/Patriarchal/Ancestral narratives
- In OT, story of Israel
- Deuteronomy 26:5-10, 6:21-25
- Confessional statement
- Who we are, our origin story
- Why we do what we do

# Genesis 12

- Ancestral Narrative
- Abraham our father
  - Exclusive
  - Sarah?
  - Hagar?
  - Household...

## When reading the Bible...

- Remember that the way a story is told is just as important as the content
- What does Abraham's call narrative about the values of the community that preserved this story and tradition?

# Abraham is...

- Called
- Called out
  - Country
  - Kindred
  - Father's house

# Markers of Identity

- Land, people, burial ground, name...
- Abram is asked to leave....
  - Country
  - Kindred
  - Father's house

And go...

- To a land...
- That I will show you...

## And I will...

- Make of you a great nation...
- Bless you...
- Make your name great...
- So that you will be a blessing...

# Markers of Israel's Identity

- Chosenness
- Blessedness
- “new”
- Blessing
- Implicit in chosenness...exclusivity

# Origins of others...

- Genesis 13 and 19
- Genesis 25