

The more and more
like our nation's



The world around us is not only changing but it is changing at a remarkable rate. As humans, we must realize that as the world changes quite literally before our eyes that the responsibility of ministry remains the same; the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and later men such as Timothy, Paul's protege in ministry. More and more, the world is realizing that to be human is to live the light of a story.

Not just any story, a story that reveals the past, illustrates the future, and establishes us in the present. Still, from a Christian worldview, we notice that the stories promoted by the world are toxic to human growth. Ministers of the gospel have a story to tell, too; the story of Scripture, of Jesus Christ and his love. This is the story that leads to salvation and a story that we must get right. Many worldviews and metanarratives are struggling with the question of human diversity. Diversity is "the condition of having or being composed of different elements: especially the inclusion of different types of people in a group or organization" (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Diversity has become a reality and cannot be denied. It is difficult to look over the fact that we are living in an age of rising diversity; not only the world at large but also in our own communities and nation. Sociologist William H. Frey predicts that the United States will become a majority-minority nation by 2044, this statement already proves true for some states (Frey, 2014).

If churches are really going to symbolize the kingdom, if they are really going to be gospel churches, then they are going to begin looking more and more like our nation's changing demographic map. As previously stated, non-

Christian worldviews are also struggling with the issue of diversity and are contributing sorely ineffective, even pernicious explanations. One of these pernicious approaches to the issue of diversity is racism. Racism is a topic that is not new and that we can't seem to get rid of. This suggests that humans have perpetual differences that must be examined throughout a cycle of superiority and inferiority. Racism is one of the primary human sins and one of the most difficult to expunge. It is the very opposite of the gospel of Jesus Christ and all that Christians should believe, teach, and live.

Radical individualism is another approach to the issue of diversity. Radical individualism develops the notion that we humans belong to ourselves and ourselves only. Contrary to this approach, very few people would admit that this is their worldview. Yet, out individualism shines through in our lives even when it is not present in our speech. The question for Christians is virtually the same as that asked of Jesus by a lawyer: "Who is my brother?" As a community, our duty is to view the world, its headlines, and its heartaches through gospel eyes. To do this is to uncover a counter-narrative to the stories the world is telling and the stories that are dividing the world right before our eyes. This counter-narrative is not only helpful but it is real.

What we need is a biblical theology in service to the gospel and a coherent proclamation of the gospel as the key to our biblical theology. In order to get here, we must consider of the most neglected passages in Scripture: Genesis 10. Here we find what is typically referred to as the table of the nations. One of the most valuable affirmations of biblical anthropology is that every human being is created in the image of God; meaning that there is a sense of wholeness to the human race. The root of all of us in Adam and Eve, we

share a common descent. Genesis only makes sense and we can only correctly understand the gospel if those for whom Christ died are all sons of Adam.

When considering the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, it is important to remember that these nations are scattering for a reason, which is provided in Genesis 11. The Tower of Babel, “ Now the whole earth had one language and the same words” (Genesis 11: 1). Not only do we share an ancestor in Adam, but we all shared the same language at one point. As Moses continues in Genesis 11: 2-9, the repetition of the word “ come” is distinct. The word appears three times in the text. The first two times the word appears, it is spoken by the inhabitants of the city of Babel: “ Come, let us make bricks,” “ Come let us build a city.” They are calling one another to collude and rebel against the Lord. Still, the Lord mimics them when he says, “ Come, let us go down, and see this thing which they have done.

” As expected, the Lord did not just go down and see the thing they had done, he went down and undoes the thing that they had done. What was the real issue with the Tower of Babel? Some suppose that the Tower may have been part of an astrological cult. However, this is not the ultimate issue. When we take a closer look at Genesis 11: 4 “ Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top to the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

” This statement is a direct disregard of the command of God in Genesis 1: 28. He never commanded us to build a great city that would house all of

humanity. He told us to fill the earth. What is found in the Tower of Babel is that those who were building this city did so for fear that they be dispersed.

Yet, God judges them by dispersing them while confusing their languages. If these people had been obedient and dispersed in obedience to Genesis 1: 28 there is at least the possibility, that in that dispersion, everyone would still have had the same language. But as it is the Table of Nations shows us that after the occurrence at Babel, the nation's dispersed according to " their clans, their nations, and their languages." Now, we must acknowledge a few points about this passage. First, we must make note that here we find an explanation of ethnicity but essentially, there is no mention, whatsoever, of skin color or physical appearance.

Alternatively, race and ethnicity are considered a matter of shared family heritage, beliefs, and language. This is unfamiliar to our modern idea of race too often closely linked to one's skin color and other physical attributes. Secondly, we pay attention to how Genesis 10 ends: with the notation that there were 70 nations. Notice, if you follow the way that these line of descent are explained, these names alone do not account for all of humanity as we know it today, or where all of humanity lives. People groups beyond this multiplied out of the dispersion. The disregard of the mandate in Genesis 1 is what leads to the judgement in Genesis 10, and this leads to the dispersion. Still, we must remember something crucial; the dispersion itself was not the judgement. The dispersion was God's plan all along, remember Genesis 1: 28.

The judgement was that rather than being dispersed in communion, they were dispersed in confusion - a story that continues even today. Lastly, we must remind ourselves of horrors of the tradition that emerged from this text promulgating the alleged "Curse of Ham" interpretation. This understanding, which said that the descendants of Ham were cursed with black skin, assaults the text and misrepresents the character of God.

While beginning in the medieval world, this understanding became culturally significant when it was disastrously used to rationalize the slave trade.

Undoubtedly, the only real Curse of Ham was the cursed biblical interpretation and horrifying misinterpretation of Scripture that developed the worst forms of racism imaginable. The only relief from fallacies like the infamous curse of Ham is the truth of the gospel and the authority of Scripture. Our common ancestry in Adam points to our common need for a Savior. Still, there is more to the story - there is the glory of God in our differences as well as in our fundamental commonality. This glory points to an infinitely greater glory that is still to come; we are en route for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Now, we must consider how the rest of Scripture develops the table of nations.

The apostle Paul plainly indicates that the dispersion of the nation's was God's plan all along. "And he made from one man, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place" (Acts 17: 26). God's plan from the beginning was to fill the earth with human beings, image carriers who would obey him by multiplying and filling the earth and by following the creation mandate in order to reflect the creator's glory. Even after the fall, his

purpose was that human beings disperse all over the globe and glorify his name. This, of course, would have to come through the redemption provided by Christ, the one who fulfills God's promise to Abraham that he would be a blessing to all the nations (Genesis 12: 3). This is made clear in Matthew 28: 18-29, " Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." Go into all the nations; Scripture is plentifully clear on this! So, the awesome story of Scripture, the story of the Bible tells that no one else is going to, it tells us that God's plan from the beginning was the dispersion of people. His judgement scattered confusion among those people because of their sin. Yet, Christ's response was to say to his people, you are to go to all the nations. Repentance and the forgiveness of sins are to be declared in his name to all the nations. That job is complexified by the confusion of languages. In the gospel, while we may not share the same language or the same ethnic heritage, we will have the same Christ.

That is the glory of the gospel! God dispersed the nation's into confusion, but Christ dispersed his disciples to save the nations. Out of these many nations, God is making one new humanity. The real problem is not how people look but what people believe in. The Table and the Tower ultimately point us to the necessity of the cross and the power of the gospel. And still, the Bible does not end there. There is yet another Table of Nations in Revelation 5 and Revelation 21.

So, we have two tables and a tower. The second table, the marriage supper of the Lamb, reveals the end of the story and the glory of the story. The narrative of the gospel discredits the stories offered by the world. Diversity is not an accident; it is a divine purpose. Diversity is not an issue; it is a divine gift.

It does not display evolutionary development and social evolution; it displays the imago Dei and the Genesis mandate to fill the earth. Today, there are issues of justice and systemic wrong. This is why the church has been wrong on these issues. The gospel must be preached to the church before the church preaches the gospel to the world. We are people of the only story that saves, the only story that leads to the healing of the nations and the gathering of a new humanity in Christ. The gospel is the only story that offers real hope and the only story that celebrates what the world fears. The gospel offers a hope that celebrates the breaking down of ethnic barriers.

For now, we can look forward to that day when the table of the Lord will be set and all the nations will live in light of the father and of the Lamb. We have come from a table of nations and a tower of Babel to a covenant with Abraham and a new covenant in blood to a table set in honor of a Lamb. Diversity is not an accident or a problem, it is a sign of God's promise.

If the church gets this wrong, it is not just getting race and ethnic difference wrong, it is getting the gospel wrong. We cannot adhere to the Great Commission without celebrating the glory of the new humanity that only Christ can create, a new humanity that lifts us from the table of the nations to the table of the Lamb.