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Genesis 10 & 11: A Theological and Geographical Framework for the Mission of Paul

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Introduction

The Apostle Paul's missionary journeys are clearly defined by his desire to bring the gospel to the Gentiles; however, several questions have arisen among scholars when considering his purpose and method. For example, how does Paul choose what areas to visit on his journeys? Is there a significant pattern to the trips that Paul makes? Are there other motivating factors to his missionary journeys apart from his call to share the gospel with Gentiles? Why does Paul plan with such decisiveness travel specifically to Spain? This is just a small sampling of the questions that arise when considering the major motivations and decision-making behind Paul's missionary journeys and work. These questions and others like them can be categorized as what biblical scholars have termed the purpose problem.

Of scholars who have sought to engage with this topic, none has defined the purpose problem better than Richard Last in his work, "What Purpose Did Paul Understand His Mission to Serve?" Last argues that among recent scholarship, little attempt has been made to investigate and identify Paul's perceived purpose as a missionary.¹ While Last's remarks here are perhaps bold in suggesting that scholars are not engaging with the purpose problem, the strength of his article is its unique approach to the problem in a holistic manner rather than focusing on individual issues that "may not reflect the complexity of Paul's perceived missionary objectives."² In this Last reveals the true purpose problem yet to be fully addressed by biblical scholars: identifying the comprehensive factors of influence behind Paul's decision-making throughout his missionary journeys that can be considered a backdrop to all of his work.

1. Richard Last, "What Purpose Did Paul Understand His Mission to Serve?," *Harvard Theological Review* 104, no. 03 (July 2011): 301.

2. *Ibid.*, 300.

While Last takes significant steps towards identifying a solution to the purpose problem, posing an eschatological framework that synthesizes Paul's underlying aim in his missionary activities as noted by several other scholars, his work stops at suggesting Paul's eschatological motivations without fully investigating the factors that have influenced the apostle to think with this perspective. Questions derived from the purpose problem are still left unanswered; particularly those which surround logical reasoning for the logistical aspects of Paul's missionary journeys. A full solution to the purpose problem must account not only for the Apostle's purposes within the locations he visits but also provide logical reasoning for visiting these locations as well. Thus, the comprehensive factors of influence behind Paul's decision-making throughout his missionary journeys have yet to be identified by scholars. This thesis aims to present a fuller solution to the purpose problem, considering both the theological and logistical aspects of Paul's missionary work in order to identify a common factor of influence.

Few would argue that the missionary work of Paul has not been of critical value to the formation of the church, the New Testament, and Christian thought. As a result, analyzing Paul's framework of thought and the factors which form the foundation for his work and claims throughout the New Testament has become the aim of many biblical scholars. If one can identify factors that have influenced Paul's work and thinking, then these same factors can be applied to modern Christian thought in order to offer insight into the New Testament and new perspectives on Paul's view of the church. While literature abounds in this regard, the work of current scholarship is almost exclusively limited to answering specific questions that derive from the purpose problem rather than posing a holistic solution to the purpose problem itself; a weakness

of recent literature first suggested by Last and noted above.³ Consider a brief selection of the most influential scholarship on the purpose problem below.

Johannes Munck

Munck's work is widely cited as the first major breakthrough among current scholarship in reaching a solution to the purpose problem. Purpose problem scholars such as John Knox, whose work will be treated below, T. L. Donaldson and Rainer Riesner each build upon the foundation established by Munck in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. Munck focuses primarily on the theological factors of influence on Paul's calling; his conclusion being that Paul's primary purpose is to preach the gospel to the Gentiles in order to bring about the second coming of Christ.⁴ Critical to Munck's argument is his belief now referred to as representative universalism: that Paul considered individual churches that he established within an area as representative of a larger geographical entity or nation.⁵ Munck's work establishes a motive for Paul's missionary purposes and posits an important perspective on Paul's logistical decisions by introducing representative universalism but fails to sufficiently engage with what foundational factors influence Paul to think in this way and offers little framework for Paul's geographical decisions, leaving his solution to the purpose problem incomplete.

John Knox

Knox adds a new element to Munck's solution to the purpose problem in his article, "Romans 15:14-33 and Paul's Conception of His Apostolic Mission." He suggests that Paul's

3. Ibid., 301.

4. Johannes Munck and Frank Clarke, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 38.

5. Ibid., 42-43.

geographical decisions were designed to “make a complete circuit of the nations,”⁶ combining this assumption and implications from Munck’s earlier conclusion to form his own solution to the purpose problem. However, his only support for this addition is speculation on the use of κύκλω (*kyklo*) in Romans 15:19 where Paul writes that he has fulfilled the ministry “from Jerusalem and all the way around (*kyklo*) to Illyricum.” Knox argues that “all the way around” is better understood as “in a circular manner,” and from this concludes that Paul’s intentions were to travel in a circle through Asia Minor and Europe, back through Northern Africa and Egypt, returning to Jerusalem. Despite its consistency with the conclusions of Munck and others, Knox’s addition relies too heavily on this interpretation of a single word in order to make this claim. While Knox has added a potential explanation for the geographical elements of the purpose problem, he also fails to identify the factors which formulate the Apostle’s thinking in this manner, leaving his solution to the purpose problem incomplete.

J. M. Scott

Scott’s work, *Paul and the Nations*, is perhaps the closest to presenting a holistic solution to the purpose problem. In geographical terms, he is the first to suggest that Paul’s understanding of the nations should be approached from a Jewish perspective, paying special attention to how Genesis 10 and the Table of Nations may have influenced the apostle’s missionary journeys.⁷ Scott gives a detailed defense for the Table of Nations as the framework for Paul’s geographical decisions—albeit not one that has gone undisputed—but does not go so far as to synthesize his

6. John Knox, “Romans 15:14-33 and Paul’s Conception of His Apostolic Mission,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 1 (March 1964): 11.

7. James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul’s Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 57.

work with the theological perspectives on Paul's purpose put forward by Munck, Knox, and others. Scott also limits the scope of his study to influencing the letter to the Galatians.

While work surrounding the purpose problem continues, none has presented a solution that satisfactorily incorporates both the theological and geographical perspectives necessary to holistically address the purpose problem. The outcomes of Paul's missionary journeys and his theological positions articulated in the letters to those whom Paul visits along the way comprise a significant portion of the New Testament. As Jürgen Becker notes in his book, *Paul Apostle to the Gentiles*, the apostle's work is fundamental to Christianity itself: "[Paul's] influence can scarcely be overestimated."⁸ Thus, serious students of Pauline literature, the New Testament, and followers of Christ as a whole should not ignore the need for an investigation into the theological and geographical underpinnings of Paul's ministry, as these will provide valuable context for Pauline thought. Upon review of current scholarship, this thesis will propose a holistic solution to the purpose problem—that Paul's missionary work of reaching the Gentiles with the gospel is influenced by an effort to reclaim the nations listed in Genesis 10 and scattered in Genesis 11:1-9. The Table of Nations provides logistical reasoning for the locations that Paul chooses to visit, and their scattering at the Tower of Babel offers a theological backdrop for Paul's work among these nations. The implications of such a solution to modern Christianity's perspectives on the New Testament and Pauline thought abound. Eschatological thought, the role of the New Testament church, missional purpose and activity, and biblical study are just a few of the areas in which this holistic solution to the purpose problem will have influence. Accepting that Paul has the Table of Nations and their scattering at the Tower of Babel in mind grants

8. Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Nashville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 1.

insight not only into the Apostle's purpose and missionary journeys but also into many of his key emphases in the New Testament epistles which directly affect the church today.

Limitations/Delimitations

Investigating the full range of influence that Genesis 10 and 11 has on Jewish and Christian thought is beyond the scope of this thesis. As a result, discussion of this matter will be limited to a selection of key Old Testament passages related to Genesis 10 and 11 that prove the chapters are formative for Jewish thought, as well as Second Temple literature and the work of other New Testament writers that draws upon these chapters. Once enough evidence has been provided to accept that these passages indeed influence Paul and his contemporaries, the attention of the thesis will be limited to the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Pauline thought. Furthermore, examining the Genesis 10 and 11 framework within the full breadth of the Pauline corpus is beyond the scope of this thesis, so a representative selection of his works will be chosen to demonstrate how one might apply this framework to gain insight into all of Paul's writings in the New Testament.

A final limitation is in the nature of the purpose problem. It is perhaps a fruitless task to conclusively determine an author's intentions without the ability to confirm with the author himself, and that is not the aim here. Rather, this thesis will offer a solution to the purpose problem by way of demonstrating that the Table of Nations and their scattering at the Tower of Babel are a common factor of influence among Paul's demonstrated purposes that have more likely than not played a key role in the apostle's intentions throughout the New Testament. The distinction is this: The Table of Nations provides the necessary context for Paul's work and purpose, but is not the sum of his intentions in all circumstances.

Research Methods

This thesis is evaluation and synthesis driven. The primary work of research is found in comparing and analyzing various perspectives on the purpose problem; that is, investigating what solutions current biblical scholarship has proposed to questions derived from the purpose problem and synthesizing these proposals in order to identify a common factor that lays their foundation. In following, a case can be built for the strength of this common factor's influence on the mission of Paul to propose the factor as a fuller solution to the purpose problem. As a result, there are two major categories of materials that are relevant and will be taken into consideration throughout this thesis. First, many of these materials will consist of scholarly contributions to the purpose problem. Works that offer comprehensive solutions to the purpose problem are limited but works that offer various perspectives on the problem and solutions to key questions that derive from the purpose problem are available and will be considered. Second, materials that examine the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Jewish and Christian thought will be considered. These materials will be used to support Genesis 10 and 11 as the common factor in Paul's missionary mindset, offering a fuller solution to the purpose problem.

Several sources for scholarly material offering perspectives on the purpose problem and the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 will be utilized in the preparation and research for this study. Among these are the Jerry Falwell Library for books and other physical works, and databases such as ATLA, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and the Theological Journal Library will be accessed for journal articles. This research will be gathered and correlated prior to the writing of this thesis, with additions during the writing as necessary or deemed valuable.

While scholarly contributions to the purpose problem and works which examine the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Jewish and Christian thought are critical to the research of this

thesis, a third category of materials is necessary to consider: the primary sources at hand. The works of the apostle Paul in the New Testament will be investigated with the intent of discovering any questions that are derived from the purpose problem which scholars must interact with in order to present a holistic solution to the purpose problem. Further, the New Testament book of Acts will be key to understanding and determining the geographical issues that arise from the purpose problem and will thus be investigated with Paul's geographical movement in mind. In following, scholarly contributions to the purpose problem will be analyzed. This process involves several steps: (1) identifying the key issues surrounding the purpose problem that are addressed by current scholarship, (2) identifying the proposed solutions to the purpose problem or solutions to issues derived from the purpose problem offered by current scholarship, and (3) determining the commonalities between solutions to the purpose problem that indicate the possibility of a fuller solution which will synthesize the perspectives that have been put forward. Finally, materials that analyze the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Jewish and Christian thought will be analyzed. This involves two steps: (1) identifying the theological influence of these passages, and (2) identifying the geographical influence. Upon gathering this information, the theological and geographical findings will be compared with the commonalities between solutions to the purpose problem in order to determine if Genesis 10 and 11 offer the logistical and theological backdrop to the apostle Paul's missionary purposes.

Proposed Development of Thesis

The chapter division of this thesis aims to progressively demonstrate the significance of Genesis 10 and 11 in Jewish and Christian thought in order to make a case for applying the passages to Paul's own mindset. Consider the progression of thought that accompanies the chapters: (1) Genesis 10 and 11 should be considered passages of influence throughout the Old

Testament and for the apostle Paul's contemporaries; (2) Genesis 10 and 11 provide key context for the mission of the New Testament church; (3) Genesis 10 and 11 are consistent with and provide context for the missionary mindset of Paul; and (4) Genesis 10 and 11 provide a logical geographical framework for the missionary work of Paul. Building a case for the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Paul in this regard provides a fuller solution to the purpose problem by accounting for the major purposes of Paul within the locations he visits, as well as a logical framework for his choice of these locations.

Chapter one, Genesis 10 & 11 in Jewish Thought, will serve to demonstrate the importance of the Table of Nations and their scattering at the Tower of Babel to Jewish theological and geographical perspectives. Genesis 10 and 11, as well as their geographical and theological connections to other key passages in the Old Testament, will be explained in order to demonstrate that the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel have played an important role in the perspectives of Jewish writers up to the Second Temple period. The prevalence of Genesis 10 and 11 within Second Temple literature will be investigated to demonstrate that the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel offer a theological and geographical perspective that is evident up to and throughout the time of Paul's missionary work.

Chapter two, Genesis 10 & 11 and the Mission of the New Testament Church, will investigate the influence of the Table of Nations and scattering at the Tower of Babel on the formation and mission of the New Testament church. Close attention will be given to Acts 2 as the seminal missional event of the church and its contextual basis in Genesis 10 and 11 in order to demonstrate that the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel are an important backdrop to missionary work in the New Testament. Further, the influence of these events on the writings of

other New Testament authors besides Paul will be noted to prove that Paul's contemporaries have been influenced by Genesis 10 and 11 in similar contexts to Paul's own work.

Chapter three, The Missionary Mindset of Paul, will begin correlating the prominent perspectives on the missionary mindset of Paul that have been offered by scholars engaging with the purpose problem with the Jewish and Christian understanding of Genesis 10 and 11. Investigation will be made into four major theological perspectives that Paul holds of his mission work in order to suggest that these derive from an understanding of the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel: (1) the apostle's self-proclaimed title as apostle to the Gentiles, or nations, (2) the apostle's efforts to hasten the *parousia* of Christ by reaching the full number of nations, (3) the apostle's consideration of cities as representative of larger national bodies, and (4) the apostle's perceived role as the servant of Isaiah 49 bringing the good news to the nations. Special attention will be given to how Genesis 10 and 11 have influenced Paul's theological perspective in each of these areas.

Chapter four, Genesis 10 & 11 and Paul, will offer a geographical perspective on Paul's missionary journeys that accounts for his logistical plans through the lens of the Table of Nations. Consideration will be given to Josephus' Table of Nations to connect the locations of Genesis 10 to geographical locations in Paul's day. The apostle's journeys will also be correlated with these nations, with an understanding of representative universalism in mind. Special attention to Paul's final stated destination, Spain, will be given in order to demonstrate how Genesis 10 provides a synthesized perspective of the solutions to the purpose problem which address why the apostle specifically intended to travel there. This chapter will also address selections from the Pauline corpus which demonstrate how the Genesis 10 and 11 framework offers insight into the apostle's writings; statements concerning the implications of salvation and

logistical plans offering significant examples of the influence of Genesis 10 and 11 on Pauline thought.

Chapter five, Implications of the Solution to the Purpose Problem, will bring the Genesis 10 and 11 framework for Pauline thought into modern significance, addressing areas of influence that are relevant to Christians today. Consideration will also be given to how the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel not only influence Paul's missionary purposes but impact the missional activity of the modern church.

Results

The aim of this thesis is to offer a holistic solution to the purpose problem. Current scholarship has yet to provide a perspective that accounts for both the theological perspectives of Paul's missional work and geographical plans of Paul's missionary journeys. By establishing the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel as a common factor from which Paul's theological perspectives and geographical decision making derive, this study will build a foundation from which future work can gain insight into Pauline thought and encourage a renewed emphasis on understanding Genesis 10 and 11 when considering biblical study of the New Testament and the missionary activity of the church.

Genesis 10 & 11 in Jewish Thought

Demonstrating that Pauline thought is influenced by the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel accounts begins with recognizing these passages' significance throughout the history of Jewish thought leading up to Paul's time. Few would suggest that the book of Genesis itself has not been of major importance to Jewish and Christian writers, and the stories of Genesis 10 and 11 are no exception to that rule. Indeed, the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel provide

geographical and theological perspectives that are prevalent throughout the Old Testament and within Second Temple literature. Acknowledging that these groups were influenced in thought by Genesis 10:1-11:9—that is, the writers of the Old Testament whose work Paul read and interacted with regularly, and the Second Temple writers whose Jewish perspectives are contemporary with Paul—leads to the reasonable conclusion that Paul himself is more than likely influenced by the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel in his own writings and work.

Influence of Genesis 10 & 11 in the Old Testament

Genesis 10:1-11:9 provides a framework for the Old Testament writers' geographical and historical considerations. The Table of Nations and its structure offer a window into the biblical writers' understanding of geography and the known world. Note the numerical structure of the table: there are seventy nations listed in total, tracing the origins of people groups from three lineages. Seven and ten, and in this case a multiple of these two numbers, are numerical figures throughout the biblical writings used to indicate completeness.⁹ The use of seven continues throughout the table often; for example, the descendants of Japheth are arranged in two groups of seven, the descendants of Cush and Mizraim, also sevens. The symmetry of the creation account in Genesis 1 forms the initial basis for the significance of the number seven in Jewish thought. In six days, God forms and fills the formless and empty world of Genesis 1:2, and on the seventh day, the Lord rests upon the completion and accomplishment of his creative work.¹⁰ There are obvious connections between this passage, the number seven, and the sabbath theology and tradition seen throughout the Old Testament and in Jewish history, but the significance of the

9. K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 430.

10. Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, 2. print., Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 24.

number seven in terms of completeness goes far beyond the sabbath, and is employed by the biblical writers to represent completeness in a variety of different contexts. In 2 Kings 5:10, Elisha is commanded to wash seven times to be completely cleansed. The Psalmist considers the words of the Lord to be completely refined, “like gold refined seven times” (Ps 12:6). Seven is used to demonstrate complete punishment, as in Leviticus 26:21, or complete victory, as in Deuteronomy 28:7. Much more can be said in this regard, but the significance to the Table of Nations is evident: the listing of seventy nations and repetitive use of sevens symbolically represents the complete nations of the world known to the Israelites, and thereby stands as a framework for their geographical perspective.

Though there are some nations of significance missing from the table, it is written to account for the origins of the known world and the people groups with whom the Israelites interact throughout their history. The three lineages offered within the Table of Nations trace the nations of Israel’s world branching out from their homeland in Canaan. In K. A. Matthews’ commentary on the passage, he notes,

The ancient cartographer arranged the “map” of people from the perspective of Israel’s Canaan (later “Palestine”) as the point of departure. The three geographical arcs of the branches intersect at the center—that is, Canaan, Israel’s future homeland. The Japhethites are primarily associated with northern and western sites (Asia Minor and Europe); the Hamites with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and some of Arabia; and the Shemites with the areas of northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and Arabia.¹¹

Again, the table is offered to establish the geographical perspective held by the Israelite people. Further, several nations that reappear throughout the Old Testament in conflict with the Israelites are accounted for in the table’s lineages. For instance, Egypt, Canaan, Babylon (accounted for by

11. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 432.

Babel and the land of Shinar),¹² Assyria, the Philistines, and more, each a nation set in opposition to Israel throughout their history appear within the table. The Table of Nations offers a theological basis for why these people groups are found in opposition to Israel, and at minimum, there is a concerted effort by the author to provide a basis for geographical thinking that comes to mind when later biblical authors discuss these people groups.

As a prominent example, the book of Ezekiel demonstrates a connection to geographical thinking that is established by the Table of Nations when discussing those in opposition to Israel. Consider the prophet's words in Ezekiel 38:1-6:

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, o Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-Togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you."

The identity of Gog remains uncertain, but few scholars have interacted with Gog and the associated place, Magog, without considering the Table of Nations influential to determining his identity.¹³ Magog appears only twice elsewhere in the Old Testament—once in Genesis 10:2, and again in the chronicler's genealogy (1 Chr 1:5) which appropriates the lineages of Genesis 10.¹⁴ In a similar manner, Gog only appears in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles 5:4, again a lineage

12. Ibid., 437.

13. See Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 330-331; John B. Taylor *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity press, 1969), 238; David L. Thompson, "Ezekiel," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ezekiel & Daniel*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, vol. 9 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010), 255.

14. David W. Baker, "Magog (Person)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 471.

directly connected to Genesis 10 and treated below. Meshech and Tubal (Ezek 38:2-3), along with Gomer (Ezek 38:6) are found in Genesis 10:2 with Magog as they are here, listed among the sons of Japheth, and throughout the remainder of Ezekiel 38 several other names appear which derive from the Table of Nations (c.f. Ez 38:5, 13). The author likely has the geographical orientation established by the Table of Nations in mind as he discusses these nations to the north who will come in opposition to Israel. Further, the Table of Nations will undoubtedly come to mind for readers familiar with Genesis 10 upon hearing these names which are unique to the Table of Nations tradition.

That the biblical authors held the Table of Nations as authoritative for geography and history is evident in the appropriation of the lineages by later biblical works. As referenced briefly above, a notable example is the genealogy offered by the Chronicler in 1 Chronicles 1-2, which directly draws upon the genealogies of Genesis, including the Table of Nations, to account for Israel's historical lineage and origins. The author follows the order of Genesis 5 in tracing Adam to Noah and pulls directly from Genesis 10:2-4 with minimal differences to account for the sons of Japheth.¹⁵ He further names the descendants of Ham in concert with the names of Genesis 10:6-20, and again with the descendants of Shem closely following the list of Genesis 10:21-29 with a few omissions of explanatory phrases about the individuals named. While there is debate surrounding the date of Chronicles' writing, it is certainly one of the later books of the Old Testament and the final book in the ordering of the Hebrew Bible. It is evident that the historical and geographical perspective of the Table of Nations was prevalent up to the time of the Chronicler and thereby throughout most of the Old Testament writings.

15. J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 50.

Not only does Genesis 10:1-11:9 offer a geographical and historical perspective that is prevalent throughout the time of the biblical writers, but the passage also provides an important framework for some of the key theological perspectives held by the Old Testament writers. The Tower of Babel event finds its significance as the reason for the division of nations listed in the Table of Nations. The two chapters are intended to be read together as a unit, where the Tower of Babel event in Genesis 11:1-9 expands upon the concluding statement of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:32b: “And from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood;” and more specifically, the reasoning behind the naming of Peleg in Genesis 10:25, a name meaning “division” in Hebrew,¹⁶ “for in his days the earth was divided.” The Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel offer the biblical explanation for the division of nations and the diverse people groups that exist in the world of the Israelites.

The immediate context of Genesis 10:1-11:9 suggests that these events should be viewed as a precursor to the promise to Abraham made in Genesis 12:1-3. Bruce Waltke argues that “God’s division of the world into nations provides the backdrop for God’s innovation to elect one particular nation from Shem’s lineage to bring universal salvation.”¹⁷ The lineage of Shem (Gen 11:10-26) and the subsequent lineage of Terah (Gen 11:27-31) function in a transitional sense to connect God’s affairs with the nations to God’s dealings with the nation of Israel.¹⁸ It is within this setting of dispersal after the Tower of Babel event that Abram, and subsequently Israel, are called out to a unique purpose in the world that drives both the plot and significance of the remainder of the Old Testament. Here, Matthews notes, “The story of the tower . . . looks

16. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. I (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 382.

17. Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 193.

18. Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, New Cambridge Bible commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123.

ahead by anticipating the role that Abram (12:1-3) will play in restoring the blessing to the dispersed nations.”¹⁹ It is no coincidence that the promise to Abram occurs immediately following these accounts, and connections between the two abound. Where God thwarts the efforts of the nations to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:4), he chooses Abram and declares that he will make Abram’s name great (Gen 12:3). In contrast to the curse of confusion and dispersal that God places on all the nations of the earth (Gen 11:7-8), he declares that through Abram all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). The change of Abram’s name to Abraham in the Lord’s reaffirmation of the Genesis 12 covenant in Genesis 17:5 connects back to the tower of Babel once more. God chooses Abram out of the dispersed nations to become the “father of many nations;” Abraham as a name offering a wordplay on the Hebrew words for “father” and “many.”²⁰ Dockery makes the theological significance of these passages for the Israelites clear: “In the days of Peleg, son of Eber, the earth was ‘divided’ (10:25). Through Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant it someday would be reunited.”²¹ The Abrahamic covenant forms the backbone of Israel’s identity as a people—those who have been chosen by God to bring blessing to the scattered nations—and the covenant’s significance depends foundationally on the reversal of the curse brought on by the failure of the nations at the Tower of Babel. In this, it is evident that the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel offer a fundamental theological framework that impacts the Israelites and is in the view of the biblical writers.

19. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11*:26, 428.

20. K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 202.

21. David S. Dockery, Trent C. Butler, eds., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 127.

The biblical prophets have the Table of Nations and their scattering at the Tower of Babel in mind when declaring that God is not merely concerned with Israel, but that his choice of Israel is to restore his relationship with the fullness of nations on the earth. Characteristic of the prophetic hope for the future are their visions of a kingdom united and universal, centered in Jerusalem under the rule of God in the eschatological day of the Lord.²² The prophetic hope is a reversal of the sins and consequences of the Tower of Babel, a hope possibly retraced by the prophet Zephaniah in Zephaniah 3:9-12:²³

For at that time I will change the speech of the people to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and service him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD.

Thematic connections to the Tower of Babel events abound within Zephaniah's prophetic declaration. At the tower, the Lord confused the speech of the nations, but here he changes the speech of the people to a "pure speech" that allows the nations to call upon the LORD "with one accord" (Zeph 3:9). Even those people beyond the land of Cush, a notable initial name from those dispersed in the Table of Nations will be brought in (Zeph 3:10). Where the people were put to shame by their rebellious construction of the tower in Genesis 11:1-9, here the LORD declares that he will remove the "proudly exultant ones"—those who seek to make a name for themselves—and the people will not be put to shame (Zeph 3:11). Rather than making a name

22. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 475.

23. Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 45.

for themselves, the people will “seek refuge in the name of the LORD” (Zeph 3:12). The undoing of the Babel event is reflected in anticipation by Zephaniah.

While Zephaniah’s prophetic hope draws directly on the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel, other prophetic writers draw heavily on the theological perspectives of Moses, whose view of the nations and Israel stems from the events of Genesis 10 and 11. Moses’ song in Deuteronomy 32 directly references the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel and becomes a key passage for later Old Testament writers. He proclaims, “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage” (Deut 32:8-9). The debate surrounding the textual traditions of this passage aside, the clear background to the division of peoples and territorial allotments Moses references is Genesis 10:1-11:9.²⁴ In spite of the division and dispersal of the nations from God’s presence, the Lord has kept Israel as his own. Israel is selected as the Lord’s treasured possession out of all the other nations, reflected in the language of his covenants in Exodus 1:5, Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, and 21. On the basis of Deuteronomy 32:8-9, Eugene Merrill suggests that the division of nations and their arrangement was from the beginning done in order to accommodate the Lord’s purposes for Israel among the nations.²⁵ Later biblical passages that draw upon Moses’ concept of Israel as the Lord’s heritage and treasured possession are rooted in the theological perspective defined by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel. The writings of the Old Testament are permeated by this theological concept (Nu 23:9; 1 Sa 10:1; 26:19; 1 Ki 8:51, 53; Ps 74:17; Je

24. W. F. Albright, “Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII,” *Vetus Testamentum* 9, no. 4 (October 1959): 343–44.

25. Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 413.

10:16; Zec 2:12, to name a few), and as a result, the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel should be considered foundational theologically for the biblical writers.

Little doubt can be cast on the prevalence of Genesis 10 and 11 within the perspectives of the Old Testament writers considering the above. Geographically and historically, the Table of Nations offers an authoritative account of the nations in the known world referenced and adopted by the later biblical writers. Theologically, the Tower of Babel is contextually foundational to the Abrahamic Covenant, the prophetic hope for a reclamation of the scattered nations under God, and God's treatment and purposes of Israel, each prevalent throughout the biblical writings. Thus, these passages provide geographical and theological perspectives that are in the minds of biblical writers with whose work Paul interacted with regularly.

Influence of Genesis 10 & 11 in Second Temple Literature

Not only do Genesis 10 and 11 provide geographical and theological perspectives that are in the minds of the biblical writers with whose work Paul interacted with regularly but that are also in the minds of Second Temple writers whose Jewish perspectives are contemporary with Paul. The Second Temple writers still considered the perspectives offered by the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel accounts important and valuable. The Table of Nations remains at the root of many Second Temple geographical claims, and the Tower of Babel narrative is appropriated in many of the significant Second Temple works to offer a theological perspective on current events.

Scott, the significant purpose problem scholar noted in the introductory material above, argues for the Table of Nations as foundational for the geographical perspectives of early Jewish and Christian thought, noting, "Any description of Jewish geographical conceptions must deal

with the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 and the influential tradition to which it gave rise.”²⁶ In his work, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity*, he connects the extra-biblical *Jubilees* 8-9 to the Table of Nations and later Second Temple geographical claims. *Jubilees* can be considered a rewriting of the biblical events that take place within Genesis and up through Exodus 20. While some of the theological messages of these passages differ from the Bible throughout the text, *Jubilees* is clearly influenced by and holds to the geographical division of the known world among the sons of Noah. Where Genesis 10 offers a list of Noah’s descendants, *Jubilees* 8-9 provides an expanded commentary on the sons and grandsons of Noah with specific geographical locations and boundaries incorporated.²⁷ Compare, for example, *Jubilees* 9:1-2 with the biblical counterpart in Genesis 10:6: “And Ham divided amongst his sons, and the first portion came forth for Cush towards the east, and to the west of him for Mizraim, and to the west of him for Put, and to the west of him (and to the west thereof) on the sea for Canaan.”²⁸ Here, the author follows precisely the listing of Genesis 10:6, with a few additional comments: “The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt [Mizraim], Put, and Canaan.” This type of comparison can be seen throughout the chapter, with close parallels between the lists of *Jubilees* 9 and Genesis 10. R. H. Charles defends to general consensus a range of 109 and 105 B.C. as a date for the writing of *Jubilees*,²⁹ and thus the geographical claims of Genesis 10 can be said to have persisted up to this time. As Paul lived during the first century A.D., the influence of Genesis 10 geographically closely approaches Paul. However, the geographical claims of *Jubilees* based on Genesis 10

26. James M. Scott, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity: The Book of Jubilees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23.

27. *Ibid.*, 32.

28. R. H Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament: with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books*. Vol. 2 (Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2004), 27.

29. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

further influence or are drawn upon in several later Jewish works of the Second Temple period which are contemporary with Paul's own time and writings. According to Scott's work, Jewish texts such as the Third Sibyl (§§110–61)³⁰ and the War Rule (1QM 1–2)³¹ presuppose the *Jubilees* tradition of the Table of Nations, and notably, Josephus adopts the Table of Nations from *Jubilees* (*Ant.* 1.122-47).³² Consider a brief portion of the work, in which Josephus treats the sons of Japheth:

For Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, but were then called Gomerites. Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians. Now as to Javan and Madai, the sons of Japheth; from Madai came the Madeans, who were called Medes by the Greeks; but from Javan, Ionia, and all the Grecians, are derived. Thobel founded the Thobelites, who are now called Iberes; and the Mosocheni were founded by Mosoch; now they are Cappadocians. (*Ant.* 1.123-125)

Josephus' account follows the order of the account of Japheth's sons from *Jubilees* 9:8-13, connecting the locations given by *Jubilees* to locations that would have been known by his audience:

And the first portion came forth for Gomer to the east from the north side to the river Tina; and in the north there came forth for Magog all the inner portions of the north until it reaches to the sea of Me'at. And for Madai came forth as his portion that he should possess from the west of his two brothers to the islands, and to the coasts of the islands. And for Javan came forth the fourth portion every island and the islands which are towards the border of Lud. And for Tubal [in Josephus, Thobel] there came forth the fifth portion in the midst of the tongue which approaches the border of the portion of Lud to the second tongue, to the region beyond the second tongue unto the third tongue. And for Meshech [Mosoch] came forth the sixth portion, all the region beyond the third tongue . . .

30. The Third Sibyl is not easily dated, but the Jewish Sibyllines are appealed to thoroughly by Jewish and Christian writers of the earliest centuries A.D. R. H. Charles connects the works of Josephus, Hermas, Clement, Justin, Tertullian, and others to these Second Temple Works, suggesting their influence up through and beyond Paul's time. For more, see Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 370-371.

31. Philip R. Davies dates the War Rule scroll between the end of the 1st century B.C. and early 1st century A.D. See Philip R. Davies, "War Rule," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 876. Most scholars identify the Kittim of the document with the Romans, in which case the scroll should be dated between the Roman occupation in 63 B.C. and the disbanding of the Qumran community in 68 A.D., suggesting the influence of the Table of Nations on works within the lifetime of Paul.

32. Scott, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity*, 36.

Again, both accounts adopt the order of Genesis 10:2: “the sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.” From Genesis 10, *Jubilees 9* offers an extended commentary on the nations with locations designated. From *Jubilees 9*, Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* connects those locations to the people groups of his day.³³ Each is dependent on the former to offer their geographical perspectives. Less evident adoptions of and references to the geographical claims made in *Jubilees* about the Table of Nations have been argued for among many other Second Temple works, and in this, there can be no doubt that the geographical perspective of Genesis 10 is influential up to the time of Paul.

Just as the Table of Nations influences the geographical perspective of the Second Temple period, the Tower of Babel is considered theologically influential. Like *Jubilees*, the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo offers a rewriting of the biblical history found in Genesis up through the reign of Saul.³⁴ Pseudo-Philo’s account follows the Genesis 11 account of the tower closely, with a few additions:

Then all they that had been divided and dwelt upon the earth gathered together thereafter and dwelt together; and they set forth from the East and found a plain in the land of Babylon: and there they dwelt, and they said every man to his neighbor: Behold, it will come to pass that we shall be scattered every man from his brother, and in the latter days we shall be fighting one against another. Now, therefore, come and let us build for ourselves a tower, the head whereof shall reach unto heaven, and we shall make us a name and a renown upon the earth.³⁵

33. The life of Falvius Josephus is dated from A.D. 37/38 to around A.D. 100. See Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers, Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 337. Josephus’ appropriation of Genesis 10 suggests the geographical influence of this passage within the works of a writer contemporary with Paul.

34. Phillip Michael Sherman, *Babel’s Tower Translated: Genesis 11 and Ancient Jewish Interpretation*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 117 (Boston: Brill, 2013), 122.

35. Pseudo-Philo, M. R James, and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Great Britain), *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, (London: Society for promoting Christian Knowledge; Macmillan, 2010), 89–90.

While the parallels to the biblical text are evident, Phillip Michael Sherman argues that Pseudo-Philo makes slight modifications to the biblical text in order to offer a commentary on the political situation of his day.³⁶ Note the emphasis on the people's concern with political unity above, wherein the initial cause of the tower's construction is to avoid scattering and war against one another. Pseudo-Philo uses the Tower of Babel text to suggest that the political unity offered through Rome should be viewed as a form of idolatry, providing justification for the Jewish revolt.³⁷ This type of theological commentary on current events is characteristic of many Second Temple works, and the Tower of Babel is often appropriated for such aims. Flavius Josephus similarly writes of the tower with a political bent in his *Judean Antiquities*, his significant account of the historical foundations of the Jewish people. Per Bilde argues that Josephus' writes elsewhere to warn against additional rebellion against Rome,³⁸ and it is likely that his appropriation of the tower, though opposed to Pseudo-Philo's theological implications, is toward this aim. Further, Sherman argues that *3 Baruch* follows suit, presenting the Tower of Babel as "a warning against excessive apocalyptic hope and as a hidden symbol that the oppression embodied and symbolized by Babel has been noted by the God of Israel."³⁹

As just a few of the selections from Second Temple literature that reflect the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel tradition, there is certainly evidence to suggest that Genesis 10 and 11 are influential on the perspectives held by Paul's Jewish contemporaries. The Table of Nations lays a standard framework from which *Jubilees*, and later the Third Sibyl, the War Rule, and other Second Temple literature develop their geographical claims. The Tower of Babel is

36. Sherman, *Babel's Tower Translated*, 151.

37. Ibid.

38. Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works and Their Importance*, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 2 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 76.

39. Sherman, *Babel's Tower Translated*, 195.

appropriated by Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, Josephus' *Judean Antiquities*, and *3 Baruch*, among other literature to offer theologically oriented commentaries on current events. Thus, the geographical and theological viewpoints offered by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel are influential not only throughout the Old Testament writings with which Paul interacted regularly but within the minds of Second Temple writers whose Jewish perspectives are contemporary with Paul.

Genesis 10 & 11 and the Mission of the New Testament Church

As the geographical and theological viewpoints offered by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel are influential not only throughout the Old Testament writings with which Paul interacted with regularly but in the minds of Second Temple writers whose Jewish perspectives are contemporary with Paul, it is reasonable to believe that these passages are in the mind of Paul and influential for his work as well. While acknowledging the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel as passages of significant influence for the Old Testament and Second Temple writers offers reason to accept their influence on the mind and work of Paul, perhaps the most convincing evidence is found within the works of Paul's peers—that is, the writers of the New Testament whose work and mission parallels that of the apostle. As in the writings of the Old Testament and Second Temple literature, Genesis 10 and 11 provide geographical and theological perspectives that are prevalent within the non-Pauline writings of the New Testament. Notably, Acts 2 as the seminal missional event of the church is contextually linked to the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel ideologies, and these events have influenced the remainder of Luke's writing, the writings of Matthew, the apocalypse of John, and are echoed throughout the entirety of the New Testament. Accepting that Genesis 10:1-11:9 provides key context for the mission of the New Testament church and the other authors of the New

Testament strengthens the conclusion that Paul himself is more than likely influenced by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel in his own writings and missionary activity.

Genesis 10 & 11 as the Contextual Background for Acts 2

The events of Pentecost detailed in Acts 2 have come to be known as the “birth of the church.”⁴⁰ As the establishment of the church, it is easy to see how Acts 2 is influential for those within the New Testament and onward involved with the mission of the church and with church planting—the apostle Paul included. Internal evidence within Acts allows scholars to identify the author without many dissenting opinions, and of relevance are the uses of the first-person plural pronoun “we” in several sections of the account (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18, and 27:1-28:16). These passages detail the missionary journeys of Paul, and as a result, the author of Acts is suggesting he was a companion of Paul during Paul’s missionary work. Of the companions mentioned throughout Paul’s letters, Luke, the “beloved doctor” (Col 4:14), one of the last of those to remain with Paul throughout his ministry (2 Tim 4:11), is the only one who was present during each of the first-person accounts in Acts. From this and additional data, scholars have accepted Lucan authorship of the account.⁴¹ As a close and longtime companion and servant of Paul, it is reasonable to believe that Luke and Paul shared many of the same perspectives on their missionary activity, and the influence of the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel on these perspectives is reflected in Acts 2.

40. John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 95.

41. See Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 147; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 20; Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 19; Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 1.

Theological connections between the events of Pentecost in Acts 2 and the Tower of Babel abound. Recall briefly the core storyline of Genesis 11:1-9: all the nations of the earth, unified in language, gather in one place to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:1-4). Divine intervention confuses the language of the gathered and disperses the people from there all over the earth (Gen 11:5-9). Similarly, Acts 2 follows this core storyline in reverse: devout Jews from every nation under heaven are brought together at the sound of divine intervention (Acts 2:5-6), in which the speech of the people transcends language (Acts 2:6-13) to proclaim the name of Jesus (Acts 2:14-36). Such clear reversal patterns offer strong reason to suggest that the events of Pentecost in Acts 2 should be considered the New Testament counterpart to the Tower of Babel account in Genesis 11.⁴² There is a sense in which the hope of the biblical prophets—visions of the fullness of the nations on the earth united and centered in Jerusalem under the rule of God—is here inaugurated when the reversal of the sins and consequences of the Tower of Babel begins. In their brief exegesis of Acts 2, Alexander D. Soal and Desmond Henry argue that the connections between this inaugural reversal of the Tower of Babel and the inaugural moments of the church cannot be coincidental:

It can be said that these two texts have profound theological connections. Luke, as the likely author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, has taken care throughout both books to establish a continuous link between God's actions in the past with Israel and his actions in the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the church. For this reason, it is probable that Luke deliberately constructed the Pentecost account in Acts 2 as a counterbalance to the Babel story in Genesis 11... to make a theological affirmation against the background of, and together with the Babel story.⁴³

42. Jonathan J. Bonk, "Beyond Babel: Pentecost and Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 2 (April 2006): 57.

43. Alexander D. Soal and Desmond Henry, "The Reversal of Babel: Questioning the Early Church's Understanding of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts as a Reversal of the Curse of Babel," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (August 23, 2018): 6.

Wherein the Old Testament, Abraham and his family are called out of the Tower of Babel experience to their unique purpose as a blessing to the dispersed nations, here Luke offers a theological perspective that suggests the New Testament church is the continuation of that purpose; God’s vessel and chosen instrument for restoring blessing to the dispersed nations. The mission of God for the church is indeed a mission to the nations—to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20), in Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In this, Luke understands Genesis 11:1-9 to be key context for the mission of the New Testament church.

Considering the theological connections to the Tower of Babel in Acts 2, it is logical to examine the story’s counterpart—that is, the Table of Nations—for geographical insight into Acts 2 as well. Scholars have long sought to identify the origin and significance of the listed nations in Acts 2:9-10. As Luke portrays it, beginning briefly in verse 5, “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.... Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome.” Emphasis is further made in the passage on the different languages spoken by these people groups (c.f. 2:4, 6-7, 11). Though scholarly consensus has not been met in terms of the full significance of this list, there are two observations often drawn out by commentators: this list is intended to be representative of a complete list of nations in the known world,⁴⁴ and this list “was certainly not invented by Luke himself.”⁴⁵ As a reference point for Luke’s geographical perspective, the Table of Nations—which in its own right is representative of a complete list of

44. A. R. Fausset, David Brown, and Robert Jamieson, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 175.

45. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 76.

nations in the known world—fits these observations. Few authors have discussed the significance of Luke’s listed nations without sensing a connection to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. For instance, John Stott notes that Luke includes descendants of all three branches of the Table of Nations, offering his own table of nations comparable to Genesis 10.⁴⁶ Stephen Neill suggests the nations mentioned by Luke draw from the perspective of complete nations within Genesis 10, and even those which do not seem to fit immediately within the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth from the table were added intentionally by Luke with the Table of Nations in mind to convey a representative universalism.⁴⁷ Even Mikeal C. Parsons, notably averse to the Table of Nations connection in Acts 2, is unable to engage with Luke’s list without noting that the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 comes to mind. He writes, “The list of nations in Acts 2:9-11 may be taken as an ‘update’ of the table-of-nations tradition found in Gen 10, a point rarely examined by interpreters.”⁴⁸

Luke’s table of nations fits well with the representative concept demonstrated in the Genesis 10 Table of Nations. Consider William J. Larkin’s tour of the list:

They begin with the far eastern border of the Roman Empire (*Parthians, Medes and Elamites*), move westward through *Mesopotamia and Judea*... and then encompass regions of Asia Minor in a circular counterclockwise fashion, commencing with the east: *Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia*. The list then notes southern regions of the empire—*Egypt* and west of it, *the parts of Libya near Cyrene*. Rounding out the list is *Rome*, the Empire’s center, and two geographical extremities: the islands of the sea, represented by *Cretans*, and the desert places, represented by *Arabs*.⁴⁹

46. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 68.

47. Stephen C. Neill, *Call to Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 12.

48. Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 38.

49. William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, vol. 5, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), 51.

True to the Table of Nations tradition, this listing again seems to offer a geographical perspective on the nations which places Israel at the relative center, accounting for nations to the east, west, north, and south of Jerusalem. In this structure, the “impression of universality” is indicated;⁵⁰ a core purpose behind the Genesis 10 structure as well. Certainly, Luke himself indicates his intentions to offer a representative list when introducing the people as men “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). According to Soal and Henry, this reference to every nation “means that Luke would probably have depended on the Rabbinic tradition that reckoned that all the languages of the world numbered 70, according to the Table of Nations found in Genesis 10.”⁵¹ Elsewhere, Luke draws on the representative precedent set by the Table of Nations. His account of Christ sending the seventy-two (or seventy in some manuscripts) in Luke 10:1 alludes to the Table of Nations tradition to indicate Christ’s intention to reach all the nations;⁵² perhaps a foreshadowing of the events in Acts 2 which draw on the same passage to begin this mission among the church.

The nations themselves have been variously connected by other authors to the sons of Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Scott’s work on “Luke’s Geographical Horizon” is perhaps the best of and most detailed of these. His distillation of the nations offered in Genesis 10 notes that the sons of Japheth account for the northern and western lands of Asia Minor and Europe, the sons of Ham for Egypt and North Africa, and those of Shem for Mesopotamia and Arabia.⁵³ Comparing these lands with Larkin’s discussion of Luke’s list yields obvious similarities in the geographical

50. Fausset, Jamieson, and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 175.

51. Soal and Henry, *The Reversal of Babel*, 8.

52. *Ibid.*

53. James M. Scott, “Luke’s Geographical Horizon,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, vol. 2, *The Book of Acts in Its First-Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 500–501.

areas accounted for—Asia Minor and Europe are accounted for by *Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia*, along with *Rome*; Egypt and North Africa are accounted for by *Egypt, the parts of Libya near Cyrene* along with *Cretans*, who are descendants of Mizraim (Egypt);⁵⁴ and Mesopotamia and Arabia by *Parthians, Medes and Elamites, Mesopotamia and Judea*, along with *Arabia*. Scott’s analysis of Acts 2 draws several conclusions that indicate a connection between the geographical perspective of Luke’s table of nations and the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 beyond these broad strokes. He points to the initial appearance of a lack of structure and uniformity in the list that is also characteristic of Genesis 10 and its appropriation elsewhere in the Old Testament and Second Temple Literature.⁵⁵ Further, many names for nations within both lists are shared—“In fact, approximately fifty percent of these names can be matched by the toponyms in Josephus’ ‘updated’ version of the Table of Nations in *Ant.* 1.122-147” according to Scott.⁵⁶ Of course, the immediate context of both passages bears significant theological similarities as noted above, and perhaps the best evidence for Luke’s table of nations being derivative of Genesis 10 is in the solutions found to the most difficult part of Luke’s list for scholars to reconcile with: the Cretans and Arabs are accounted for.

Further connections between the theological and geographical perspectives of Acts 2 and Genesis 10:1-11:9 can be made but in light of the above it must at minimum be conceded that the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel have influenced Luke’s account of the Pentecost events in some way. Pentecost is the event that establishes the church and commissions its mission to the nations, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that its contextual links to Genesis 10 and 11 indicate that the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel provide a key backdrop for the missionary

54. *Ibid.*, 529-530.

55. *Ibid.*, 528.

56. *Ibid.*, 529.

work of the New Testament. Luke values and is influenced by the Genesis 10 and 11 traditions, and as a close companion and follower of the apostle Paul, there is a basis for suggesting Paul does as well.

Genesis 10 & 11 in Other New Testament Writers

An additional moment of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel's influence on Luke is worth mentioning here, though there are others: his account of Paul's own words in Acts 17:26-27: "And he [God] 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, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us." Scott suggests that the context of Paul's remarks here places the apostle's frame of mind in the early Genesis narratives:

"Foreshortening the storyline of Genesis 1-10, Paul goes on to describe this God [the unknown God Paul proclaims in establishing common ground with his audience] as (1) the one 'who made the world and everything in it' (Acts 17:24-25; cf. Gen 1:1-25) and as (2) the one 'who made from one man [sc. Adam] every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation' (Acts 17:26a; cf. Gen 1:26-28; 9:1, 7, 19; 10:1-32)."⁵⁷

Paul's words echo the theological perspective of Moses seen in Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which is based directly on the events of Genesis 10 and 11—the division of peoples and territorial allotments by God (Deut 32:8), i.e. the determination of the boundaries of their dwelling place (Acts 17:26). Even "all the face of the earth" harkens back to Genesis 11:9: "And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth." Luke, if not Paul himself as Luke here claims, is certainly concerned with the origin of the world and nations depicted in the early

57. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 176.

chapters of Genesis and culminating with Genesis 10:1-11:9, and this is consistent throughout the breadth of his writings. Indeed, as Luke's account in Acts offers most of the information about Paul's missionary work and journeys, evidence for the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel as an underlying framework for Pauline thought and mission is mounting.

Luke, however, is not the only New Testament writer who is influenced by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel. Matthew's writing bears the influence of these passages in several places. Consider the genealogy of Jesus that Matthew offers in Matthew 1:2-17. While Matthew's genealogy does not rely on the genealogies of the Table of Nations directly, he seems to rely on 1 Chronicles 1-3.⁵⁸ Beginning with Judah, the names of Matthew 1:2-6a correspond to the lineage offered in 1 Chronicles 2:3-15; further, the names of Matthew 1:6b-11 follow 1 Chronicles 3:10-14; and finally Matthew 1:12-16 is derivative of 1 Chronicles 3:17-19.⁵⁹ The genealogy offered by the chronicler has already been demonstrated to rely directly on the Table of Nations, and Matthew is undoubtedly aware of this. If he holds the lineages traced in 1 Chronicles from Abraham onward as authoritative and important, there is reason to believe he also holds the earlier line of 1 Chronicles drawn from the Table of Nations as authoritative and important as well. Matthew's genealogy also deliberately leaves out generations or names (c.f. Lk 3:23-38) in order to create symbolic significance from the numbers within the passage; a practice whose precedent is set by the ten generations of Genesis 5 and the seventy nations of Genesis 10.

58. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 21.

59. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 55.

John's apocalypse, Revelation, also bears the marks of Genesis 10 and 11's influence. Perhaps most significant are the connections between the Tower of Babel and the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:1-22:5, dealt with extensively by Andreas Hock.⁶⁰ Whereas the reversal of the Tower of Babel themes begins in Acts 2, Revelation 21 and 22 offer a conclusion to the reversal period that has been inaugurated by Pentecost as followers of Jesus carry out the Great Commission. There are a few initial points of comparison that draw this theme out. In Genesis 11:4, humans build a city and tower to reach the heavens and God; in contrast, the holy city, New Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven from God to humanity in Revelation 21:2. The initiative of the people in Genesis 11 is placed in contrast with the initiative of God in Revelation 21-22,⁶¹ where humanity seeks to ascend to the dwelling place of God, and yet God's plans are to make his dwelling place with mankind (Rev 21:3). In Genesis 11:4, humanity seeks to make a name for themselves and prevent their dispersion over the earth; by contrast, God is the one who makes names great (Rev 21:14) and who offers the opportunity for glory to the nations as they enter into his holy city (Rev 21:24-26). Much more can be said here for the picture of unity which characterizes Revelation 21-22 in contrast to the disunity and dispersal that are consequential of the events of the Tower of Babel, not to mention the picture of healing of the nations that characterizes the final description of the city (Rev 22:2). Hock summarizes the significance of the link between these two passages quite nicely:

From Babel, peoples are scattered in judgment; from Jerusalem they scatter to spread the good news, which would eventuate in worldwide unity. But now we have to add a further moment of unification: that of the Holy City. Thus, a thread runs through history from Babel (Gen 11) to the Pentecostal Jerusalem (Acts 2), and from the fallen Babylon (Rev 17) to the eschatological Jerusalem (Rev 21).⁶²

60. Andreas Hock, "From Babel to the New Jerusalem (Gen 11:1-9 and Rev 21:1-22:5)," *Biblica* 89, no. 1 (2998): 109-118.

61. *Ibid.*, 110.

62. *Ibid.*, 118.

Hock sees an inverse, archetypal fulfillment of the Tower of Babel and the city of man in the city of God, New Jerusalem; a conclusion not only consistent with the theological picture of the Tower of Babel throughout Scripture but with compelling comparisons between the two texts.

Beyond these relatively direct connections to the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel events in the writings of the New Testament, allusions to and echoes of passages which in the Old Testament are connected to the theological and geographical perspective of Genesis 10:1-11:9 abound (c.f. the use of Is 42:1-6 in Mat 12:18-21, Mar 1:11, Lu 2:32; Is 49:6, 52:10 in Lk 2:30-32, Jo 8:12, Ac 13:47, 26:23; Ge 26:4 in Ac 3:25; Ex 19:5, Dt 7:6, 14:2 in 1 Pe 2:9, Re 1:6; etc.). As just a sampling of the impact that the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel have had on the writings of the New Testament, there is certainly evidence to suggest that Genesis 10 and 11 are influential on the perspectives of Paul's Christian contemporaries and the mission of the church. The Table of Nations and Tower of Babel are a counterpart to the start of the church at Pentecost in Acts 2, where Luke's theological purposes are against the background of the Tower of Babel narrative, and his geographical perspective is reminiscent of and dependent on the Table of Nations tradition. Luke records Paul's own words as dependent on Moses' perspective of the nations in Deuteronomy 32, derivative of Genesis 10:1-11:9. Further, Matthew's genealogy relies on the genealogy of the chronicler, which draws its history and value from the Table of Nations genealogies, and John's vision of God's ultimate goals are set in opposition to Genesis 11:1-9. Thus, the geographical and theological viewpoints offered by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel are influential not only throughout the Old Testament writings with which Paul interacted regularly and within the minds of Second Temple writers whose Jewish perspectives are contemporary with Paul but key context for the mission of the New Testament church and the other authors of the New Testament. It is reasonable to suggest, then,

that Paul himself is more than likely influenced by the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel in his own writings and missionary activity.

The Missionary Mindset of Paul

For the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel events to truly be considered an underlying factor of influence on the theological and geographical perspectives that drive Paul's missionary journeys, Genesis 10 and 11 must be consistent with and foundational to the prominent solutions to the purpose problem that have been offered by scholarship engaging with Paul's missionary mindset. Among the investigations of purpose problem scholars, four major theological perspectives that Paul likely holds of his missionary purposes have arisen; each with significant evidence and observable influence: (1) the apostle's self-proclaimed title as apostle to the Gentiles, or nations, (2) the apostle's efforts to hasten the *parousia* of Christ by reaching the full number of nations, (3) the apostle's consideration of cities as representative of larger national bodies, and (4) the apostle's perceived role as the servant of Isaiah 49 bringing the good news to the nations. Each of these theological perspectives offers different motivations for Paul's work and purposes, but when considered in light of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel accounts these solutions to the purpose problem are synthesized and a comprehensive factor of influence behind Paul's decision-making throughout his missionary journeys is potentially attained.

Apostle to the Gentiles

One of the most immediately recognizable perspectives within the New Testament that Paul holds of himself and his missionary work is drawn out of his self-proclaimed title as the apostle to the Gentiles. That Paul considers his primary call as an apostle to preach the good news to the Gentiles is evident. Consider Galatians 1:15-16, wherein Paul offers a discussion of his beginnings as an apostle: "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who

called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone....” Paul attributes the revelation of Jesus that he received to the purpose that God had intended for him—to preach Jesus among the Gentiles. Paul further draws on this purpose and mission in Ephesians 3:8-9: “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things....” Again, Paul declares his God-given purpose to preach to the Gentiles; and in differentiating himself and his purpose from the other ministers of the gospel, he writes in Galatians 2:9: “And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” That Paul believes himself an apostle to the Gentiles, and that a core tenant of his missionary journeys is to carry the gospel to these people is made plain by the apostle himself.

One must, however, consider the biblical context to this Gentile mission. Paul’s purpose and mission in reaching the Gentiles seem to be influenced greatly by the eschatological vision for the nations that can be seen throughout the Old Testament. Gentiles is a term drawn from the Greek ἔθνος (*ethnos*)—in the plural, ἔθνη (*ethne*)—and throughout the Septuagint, it is used in three distinct nuances: “First of all, ἔθνη is used in the sense of the ‘nations’ of the world, including Israel. . . . The second use of ἔθνη in the sense of ‘(foreign) nations’. . . the third, ‘foreign nationals,’ i.e., individuals of any nation other than the nation of the Jews.”⁶³ As one traces these uses of *ethne* throughout the Old Testament, an eschatological narrative begins to form about God and his relationship to the nations. The term first appears in the Table of Nations

63. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 58-59.

(Gen 10:5, 20, 31) and throughout the Tower of Babel narrative. When the nations chose to reject God and elevate themselves at the Tower of Babel, he disperses the nations to their inheritance and divides mankind, recorded by the Table of Nations as the lineages of Noah's sons. Moses picks up on the division of the nations at Babel to account for Israel's distinction from the nations of the world (Deut 32:8-9), furthering the narrative that the Lord dispersed the nations to their inheritance and divided mankind but reserved for Himself the people of Israel as his special possession. This reservation of Israel as God's own nation is based foundationally on the promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, the second major appearance of *ethne* in the Old Testament. Here God promises that Abraham's family will become a great nation (Gen 12:2) and that through Abraham's family—that is, the nation of Israel—all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). God calls the family of Abraham out of the dispersed nations to become a great nation; the vehicle for God's blessing to all the nations of the earth. The history of Israel as recorded throughout the rest of the Old Testament details how this promise will be fulfilled. Scott notes, "When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, 'that all the nations of the earth might know that the power of the Lord is mighty' (Josh 4:24), he took Israel to himself as 'a nation from the midst of a nation' (Deut 4:34). With this, the promise that Abraham would be made a 'great nation' was on its way toward fulfillment."⁶⁴ God expects the nation of Israel to be distinct and set apart from all other nations (Exod 19:5-6; Lev 20:26; Num 23:9; etc.), who as a kingdom of priests will make the name of God known to the nations of the earth and ultimately restore them to his blessing. Israel, however, fails at this responsibility and their sinfulness results in exile as God scatters them among the nations (Deut 28:64; Je 9:15). As the prophets envision during exile an eschatological day where God will restore the kingdom of Israel after they have

64. Ibid., 64.

been scattered among the nations, their visions extend to all the nations of the earth. Scott here writes, “Although the eschatological restoration is first and foremost for Israel, it will also affect all other nations. . . . All nations of the world will participate in the eschatological pilgrimage to Zion.”⁶⁵ Indeed, this seems to be the picture of the nations offered in Isaiah 2:2-4:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

A similar perspective in which the restoration will bring blessing to all nations is seen later in Isaiah 11:10, 25:6, 66:18-20, and among the declarations of Jeremiah in 3:17, 16:19, the prophet Zechariah in 2:15, and elsewhere throughout the visions of the prophets in the Old Testament.⁶⁶ The ultimate goal and result of the restoration of Israel is the final fulfillment of the promise to Abraham—all the nations of the earth will be blessed. As Gary Smith sees Isaiah’s vision, “God’s plans for mankind always included his desire to reach the whole world, not just the small nation of Judah.”⁶⁷

The New Testament demonstrates how this narrative that begins with Genesis 10:1-11:9 and the promise to Abraham will be fulfilled. Recall the brief mention above of Jesus sending the seventy(-two) in Luke 10:1-24. Scott discusses this passage, noting that the immediate context is

65. *Ibid.*, 72.

66. Though the original context of these passages suggests for some that Jews were in view, it is possible that Paul reads these as referring also to Gentile converts. See footnotes 84 and 88 below for a brief discussion on this issue.

67. Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 130.

Jesus' previous sending of the twelve disciples to "proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:1-6), representative of the twelve tribes of Israel.⁶⁸ In following, Jesus sends out his followers in number corresponding to the nations in the world based on the Table of Nations tradition to carry this same mission on a broader scale. Jesus sending the seventy(-two) foreshadows his intentions for the church. He explains in Luke 24:46-47, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer on the third day and rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Scott notes that Jesus' mission to all nations here "is viewed as the continuation of the mission of the seventy(-two), for the same sequence of numbers is at least implied at the beginning of Acts: twelve apostles (1:26; 2:14) and seventy(-two) nations (cf. 'every nation under heaven')." ⁶⁹ Jesus' final words in Acts expect the disciples to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, beginning in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8), and the events of Pentecost begin this mission to the nations amongst the early church as discussed above. It is at this point that the apostle Paul's words in Acts 17:26-27 are seen in a new light. Paul's core message as he shares the gospel in Athens relies on recognizing that though the nations of the world were divided and scattered upon the earth (Acts 17:26), all now can return to God (Acts 17:27).

Paul ties his mission to the Gentiles in with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that is taking place through the church as the nations of the earth are presented with the opportunity for restoration. Scott suggests that Paul regards the Abrahamic promise as a "prior announcement of the gospel itself, [and] anticipates that the nations of the world, as listed in the Table of

68. James M. Scott, "Acts 2:9-11 as an Anticipation of the Mission to the Nations," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 97.

69. *Ibid.*, 99.

Nations, will be blessed in Abraham and his seed.”⁷⁰ The apostle identifies Christ with the seed of Abraham in Galatians 3:16 and goes on to note in verse 19 that “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” Paul envisions himself as participating in the eschatological restoration narrative, facilitating the blessing that is to come to all the earth—as one with a special role and opportunity to preach the good news to the Gentiles so that through Jesus they may seek God and the Abrahamic promise will be fulfilled. Paul’s role as apostle to the Gentiles in this regard is a product of the theological perspectives and narrative set forth by Genesis 10 and 11.

Hastening the Second Coming

As noted earlier, the work of Munck has highly influenced purpose problem scholars due to his unique perspective on Paul’s role as apostle to the Gentiles. Not only does Paul see his responsibility as bringing the good news to the nations outside of Israel but as Munck argues, Paul believes preaching the gospel to the full number of nations is a prerequisite to the return of Christ.⁷¹ Several scholars affirm and reflect this perspective in their own work discussing Paul’s missional purposes. Last, the scholar who first emphasized the necessity of a fuller solution to the purpose problem concludes, “According to Paul, the eschaton would be delayed until the gospel was proclaimed to all the nations.”⁷² He further suggests that Paul believed his own work was playing a role in the timing of the second coming of Christ as he worked to bring the Gentiles under the new covenant.⁷³ Donaldson argues that Paul clearly anticipated that the second

70. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 134.

71. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 38.

72. Last, “What Purpose Did Paul Understand His Mission To Serve?”, 304.

73. *Ibid.*, 307.

coming would occur during his own lifetime⁷⁴ and that his intentions were to bring in the full number of nations to hasten its arrival.⁷⁵ These perspectives draw heavily on the words of Paul in Romans 11:25-27: “Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”

A brief discussion of Paul’s discourse here will help to clarify meaning and connect to Paul’s purposes as a missionary. In Romans 11:1-10, Paul speaks to the misconception that God has rejected Israel in lieu of the Gentiles. God has not wholly rejected his chosen people; rather, it is because of their failures that God has made salvation possible not only for the Jews but for all nations. Douglass J. Moo traces Paul’s line of thought well, arguing that Romans 11:11-32 “teaches that the rejection of Israel is not final.”⁷⁶ Because of Israel’s trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous (11:11). Their failure and hardening mean riches for the Gentiles (11:12). Their rejection means reconciliation for the world (11:15); but just as the Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree (11:17), so too can God graft the branches that have broken off back in again if they do not continue in their unbelief (11:23). Israel has been hardened in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in (11:25). Then, all Israel will be saved (11:26). In this, Paul is suggesting that “the hardening that Israel had experienced was

74. Terence L. Donaldson, “The Field God Has Assigned: Geography and Mission in Paul,” in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, ed. Leif E. Vaage (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 129.

75. *Ibid.*, 116.

76. Douglas J Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, Encountering the Bible Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 167.

limited in scope and time,”⁷⁷ temporary until and so that the full number of Gentiles can come to believe in Christ, after which all Israel will be saved. In following, the Deliverer will come from Zion (11:26). Cranfield among others argues that this references the *parousia*, the second coming of Christ from the heavenly city and presence of God.⁷⁸ Paul directly connects the framework offered by this passage to his role as apostle to the Gentiles. Note Romans 11:13-14: “Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.” In this, Leon Morris argues that Paul expresses the “deep conviction that God had given him a special responsibility to bring the gospel to the Gentile people,”⁷⁹ and as per Charles Hodge, Paul is endeavoring to bring as many Gentiles as possible into the kingdom of God,⁸⁰ in the hope that his fellow Jews will be saved (11:14) and the return of Christ will commence. That preaching the gospel to all nations is necessary prior to the *parousia* is not a concept foreign to the New Testament. As Jesus discusses the signs of the eschaton in Mark 13:10, he states, “And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.” Similarly, in Matthew 24:14 he states, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Paul is likely aware of these remarks and has synthesized them with his own missionary purposes.

77. Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 224.

78. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

79. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 409.

80. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994).

From his words in Romans 11, Paul leaves the impression that he believes his work as the apostle to the Gentiles is integral to bringing in the full number of Gentiles that will allow for the salvation of all Israel and the second coming of Christ to take place. Roger D. Aus takes this concept further to suggest that this motivation “is intimately connected with the ‘offering of the Gentiles’ of Romans 15:16.”⁸¹ Consider the passage: “But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Morris suggests in his exposition of the passage, in agreement with most commentators,⁸² that “the offering of the gentiles” here refers to Paul’s purpose in making the Gentiles an offering themselves.⁸³ For Paul, bringing Gentiles from all nations to the city of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of the prophetic hope that all the nations will come into the city of God in the end time, a precursor to the salvation of Israel and return of Christ to the city. The background to this perspective is the words of the prophet in Isaiah 66; specifically verses 17-20:

Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig’s flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the Lord. For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall

81. Roger D. Aus, “Paul’s Travel Plans to Spain and the ‘Full Number of the Gentiles’ of Rom. XI 25,” *Novum Testamentum* 21, no. 3 (1979): 234.

82. Though a possessive or subjective genitive is possible here, τῶν ἔθνῶν is a more likely a genitive of apposition, meaning “the offering *which is* the Gentiles,” (c.f. Isa 66:20). Mounce (*Romans*, 266) and Stott (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 379.) suggest that this offers explanation for Paul’s consideration of himself in the priestly role due to his ability to offer Gentile Christians as a living sacrifice to God. A possible connection to Philippians 2:17 furthers this perspective, wherein Paul refers to the “sacrificial offering of your [the Gentiles’] faith,” and this is perhaps also connected to Paul’s remarks in Romans 12:1-2 in which the Gentiles are to offer their bodies as “living sacrifices.” For others who take the genitive of apposition, see Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 511; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 257; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014); Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 38.

83. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 511.

see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord...

Though the original context of the passage suggests that Jews are in view, Aus proposes that Paul “read this Isaiah text to mean that Christian missionaries, primarily himself with his helpers, were... to gather representatives from all the Gentile nations and to bring them, the Gentiles, and not the diaspora Jews, to Jerusalem as an ‘offering’ or ‘gift’ to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. This would be the ‘offering of the Gentiles’ of which Paul speaks.”⁸⁴ With language so similar to that of Isaiah 2, it is easy to see how this perspective fits with Paul’s efforts to participate in the restoration of the nations that characterizes his missionary activity as apostle to the Gentiles; and further, connections between Paul and the theological narrative put forward in Genesis 10 and 11 grow more clear. The prophets envision a day in which God will reclaim the scattered nations to himself and restore his relationship with all the earth. Paul envisions himself as participating in the reclamation process—not merely as one with opportunity to preach the good news to the nations so that through Jesus they may seek God and come under his rule and authority again but one of those sent in Isaiah 66 to gather brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord

84. Aus, “Paul’s Travel Plans to Spain,” 241. In this view, Paul reads “brothers” as believing Gentiles from all nations. This perspective is perhaps evidenced by Paul in his remarks about the offspring of Abraham in Galatians 3, where he writes, “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham” (Gal 3:8), and “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29). Paul sees Gentiles who belong to Christ as fellow brothers alongside Jews, a perspective consistent with his earlier remarks about the Gentiles being “grafted in” to Israel’s “own olive tree” in Romans 11:17-24, which Aus takes to detail the motivation behind the offering of the Gentiles.

That Paul takes Gentiles to be the “brothers” of Isaiah 66:20 is a development of the prophecy recognized by Stott (*The Message of Romans*, 379), and though not directly making this claim as Aus and Stott have, others such as Rainer Reisner in *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988) and Richard B. Hays in *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) emphasize Paul’s concern with an ingathering of Gentiles accompanying Isaiah’s visions of restoration. In addition, see footnote 87 in reference to Jeremiah 3:14 below.

and return them to Jerusalem. Because Paul believes the full number of Gentiles is necessary for the realization of the Tower of Babel's reversal at the second coming of Christ, Paul works to proclaim the gospel to all the nations.

Representative Universalism

Suggesting that Paul's intentions in his missionary journeys are to reclaim the full number of nations has posed a problem for some: certainly, it is too monumental a task for one missionary to truly expect to share the gospel with all Gentiles during his lifetime. However, since the work of Munck, most purpose problem scholars have agreed upon a concept termed representative universalism to account for this issue. Munck argues that Paul considered individual churches that he established within an area as representative of a larger geographical entity or nation,⁸⁵ a mantle taken up by Aus, who writes, "Paul could consider a few representatives from each area in which he missionized as bringing salvation to the entire area,"⁸⁶ and referenced by Donaldson, who notes that "it has been suggested (at least since the work of Munck) that Paul thinks in terms of nations, not individuals, and, moreover, that he does so within an eschatological framework."⁸⁷ Indeed, this is a perspective with foundations in the Old Testament, and it would not be foreign to Paul or his contemporaries. The Table of Nations sets the precedent for this view of the world. Recall the representative nature of the Table itself—the listing of seventy nations and repetitive use of sevens symbolically represents the complete nations of the world known to the Israelites. While not a comprehensive list, the Table Nations is constructed with a sense of universalism and becomes an authoritative historical and

85. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 42-43.

86. Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain," 259.

87. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 115.

geographical perspective for later authors. The idea of accounting for whole people groups in a representative nature is certainly evident within the Table. Luke’s account of the nations at Pentecost also holds to this perspective, noting that men “from every nation under heaven” were there, and yet providing a list that does not categorically account for every known nation at the time. Luke’s intentions are to be symbolically representative, and he confirms the acceptability of representative universalism by applying the concept in the Pentecost account. Aus further points to Jeremiah 3:14 as an important passage demonstrating the acceptability of representative universalism in the minds of Jewish writers, and suggests that the verse likely “provided Paul with his inspiration for bringing representative Gentile Christians to Jerusalem.”⁸⁸ Consider the verse: “Return, O faithless children, declares the Lord; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jer 3:14). There is certainly a representative element here, where “one from a city and two from a family” represent their counterparts in the city and family as a whole. The Hebrew for family here, *mišpachah*, has a wider meaning than the English family implies; variously translated as “clan, family, people, kind, kingdoms, nation.”⁸⁹ It is the same term rendered in the promise to Abram of Genesis 12:3 referencing all the families of the earth and broadens the perspective of Jeremiah 3:14 to consider “one from a city and two from a people group or nation” to be representative.

88. Aus, “Paul’s Travel Plans to Spain,” 259. Like Isaiah 66, the original context of Jeremiah 3:14 suggests Jews are in view. However, it has been suggested by Jason Staples in “What do Gentiles have to Do with ‘All Israel?’ A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25-27,” *JBL* 130 no. 2 (2011): 371-390 that Paul viewed himself in the role of New Covenant proclamation parallel to Jeremiah and that though “Gentiles are not mentioned in Jeremiah’s prophecy. . . Paul’s ‘mystery’ is that faithful Gentiles (those with ‘the law written on their hearts’; see Rom 2:14-15) are the returning remnant of the house of Israel, united with the faithful from the house of Judah” (380)—this perspective in connection with Paul’s view of Gentiles as included in Abraham’s offspring (Gal 3:8). Staples’ argument offers explanation not only for why Jeremiah 3:14 influences Paul’s view of the Gentile nations, but also a possible explanation for Paul’s application of Isaiah 66:18-20 in the Gentile context, though slightly differing from Aus.

89. William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 112.

Considering these things, representative universalism is consistent with the geographical and theological perspective of the Table of Nations tradition, brought even to the scale of individuals representing a city or nation in Jeremiah 3:14, and implemented directly by Luke in Acts 2. As Paul more than likely considers the Table of Nations influential geographically and theologically, and one of his closest companions implements representative universalism in his own writing, it is reasonable to suggest that Paul holds to this mindset as well. Indeed, it would account for one of the apostle's more difficult statements in Romans 15:23. Paul writes that he works "so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable" (Rom 15:16), and in following notes the various areas in which he has "fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:19) and states that he "no longer [has] any room for work in these regions" (Rom 15:23). For Aus, the appeal to representative universalism allows for the interpretation that Paul "no longer has room to evangelize in the eastern Mediterranean. He has already won representatives there from the major Gentile cities and nations to present them and their gifts to the Messiah in Jerusalem,"⁹⁰ fulfilling his ministry to these nations. Donaldson further points to Romans 15:26, 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:5, and 2 Corinthians 9:2 among other examples to further evidence Paul's implementation of representative universalism:

These passages seem to suggest that Paul conceived of his apostolic activity in provincial and representative terms: that is, that his churches and converts would represent, in some way, the larger provincial entities in which they were located, with the provincial boundaries themselves providing the geographical framework within which his mission was to be carried out.⁹¹

Munck sees significant evidence for Paul's conception of his missionary work in terms of nations rather than individuals throughout Romans 9-11: "In these chapters Paul speaks, not of

90. Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain," 260.

91. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 115.

individuals, but of nations. Abraham and Isaac, Edom and Pharaoh are nations. God chooses one nation and rejects another. In his time he has chosen Israel and has hardened Egypt, and in Paul's day Israel was impenitent, while only a remnant was chosen."⁹² Again, connections between Paul and the theological narrative put forward in Genesis 10 and 11 grow clearer. The nations were scattered at the Tower of Babel, and now Paul is participating in the reclamation process by gathering representative brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord and returning them to Jerusalem, fulfilling the reversal of Babel and the eschatological visions of the prophets. Thus far, he has accomplished this mission in part; Paul plans his future destinations in order to reach the full number of nations in a representative way and thereby hasten the return of Christ.

The Servant of Isaiah 49

A final perspective on Paul's purpose as the apostle to the Gentiles is argued extensively by Donaldson in *Paul and the Gentiles*—that the apostle viewed his calling to the nations parallel with that of the servant in Isaiah 49, and in part modeled his own mission after this passage.⁹³ There are impressive parallels between Paul's writings and Isaiah 49:1, 5-6:

Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.... And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him... "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."⁹⁴

92. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 42-43.

93. Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 1997), 254.

94. It has been suggested above (see footnotes 84 and 88) that Paul may view eschatological passages referencing the reclamation of Jews from the nations to include Gentile converts who have been brought into the family of Abraham by faith (c.f. Gal 3:8, 29). Though Isaiah 49 seems initially to have the scattered tribes of Israel in view, Gary Smith among others have argued that here "God indicates the Servant's work would not receive great worldwide honor if he just took on the 'smaller, lighter, easier' task of restoring the tribes of Israel (a small percentage of the people on the earth). Therefore, God also gave him the task of reaching out to transform all the nations of the earth." See Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, vol. 15B, the New American Commentary (Nashville, TN:

Paul is certainly familiar with the passage, as he quotes the later verse 8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2; but parallels to the apostle's call to the nations in Galatians 1:15-16 are significant as well. Just as the servant of Isaiah 49 is called from the womb (Isa 49:1, 5) to be made a light for the nations (Isa 49:6), Paul himself declares the Lord "had set me apart before I was born (Greek *set me apart from my mother's womb*)" (Ga 1:15), in order to preach the name of Jesus among the nations (Ga 1:16). Paul works to bring the message of salvation to the ends of the earth, reflecting the call of the servant in Isaiah 49. It is no coincidence, according to F. F. Bruce, "that in Acts 13:47 Paul and Barnabas, in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, quote this last couplet [Isa 49:6] as their authority for turning to the Gentiles with the gospel."⁹⁵ Bruce goes on to connect Paul's perspective here with his strategic planning to reach the Gentile nations in preparation for the salvation of Israel and the return of Christ.⁹⁶ Paul's conviction as one who has been called to bring the news of salvation to the ends of the earth—even to the coastlands and peoples from afar—even more so pushes the apostle to reach the full number of nations in a representative way and thereby hasten the return of Christ. Elsewhere, Donaldson writes, "Called by God and entrusted with the gospel 'to the uncircumcised,' Paul was thereby commissioned to complete the Servant's task of announcing salvation to all the nations to the ends of the earth, an enterprise which, when completed, would usher in Christ's *parousia* and the consummation of salvation."⁹⁷

Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 348. This is not to say that there is dishonor in reclaiming the tribes of Jacob, but that being a light to all nations—offering restoration to both Jew and Gentile—is the greater honor. Paul indeed seems to interpret this passage as a foreshadowing of his Gentile mission (c.f. Ac 13:47). See also Larry L. Walker and Elmer A. Martens, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Lamentations*, vol. 8 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 212-213.

95. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 146.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Donaldson, "The Field God Has Assigned," 126.

Fulfilling this role certainly continues the theological narrative put forward by the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel; but interestingly, Isaiah's words in chapter 49 call upon his earlier geographical references that encompass the nations and peoples of the world at a representative and universal scale.⁹⁸ The phrase "O coastlands" (Isa 49:1) serves as a marker, drawing the reader back to the earlier references to the coastlands in the book: Isaiah 11:11; 24:15; 41:1; 42:4, 10, 12, the earliest of which comes from Isaiah's listing of the nations in Isaiah 11:11: "In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea." This again follows the Table of Nations tradition in being a representative list of nations encompassing the whole earth—indicated by verse 12's note that the gathering of the dispersed of Judah just referenced comes from the "four corners of the earth," and the list itself encompassing areas to the north, south, east, and west of Israel. The list certainly resembles much of the Table of Nations, with perhaps the most important reference being the use of Shinar for Babylon. Motyer observes this reference and asks, "There is no reason why Isaiah should have avoided mentioning Babylon. It was a prominent power of his day. Did he therefore choose to use the ancient name Shinar, the place of human self-sufficiency (Gen 11:1-9) and inherent wickedness (Zech 5:5-11), to indicate that not even pride and sin can hinder the gathering?"⁹⁹ It seems that Isaiah had the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel in mind when constructing this list, choosing the name for Babylon that would draw readers back to the theological assertions of Babel. Though the nations of the earth were divided at Babel, the Lord has set in motion a plan to reclaim the nations of the earth under his

98. J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 348.

99. *Ibid.*

rule and authority. Isaiah's visions continue to fill out how this reversal of Babel will take place, and Paul maps himself onto this narrative in Isaiah 49.

Of the four major theological perspectives that drive Paul's missionary journeys, none can be said to be inconsistent with, or even completely unrelated to the worldview put forward by Genesis 10 and 11. Rather, each of Paul's perceived missionary purposes bears the influence of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel's theological perspectives. When Paul describes himself and his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles, he envisions himself as participating in the eschatological restoration narrative that begins with the promise to Abraham in the wake of Babel, facilitating the blessing that is to come to all the earth. Paul believes his work as apostle to the Gentiles is integral to bringing in the full number of Gentiles that will allow for the salvation of all Israel and the second coming of Christ to take place, and following the representative standards set first by the Table of Nations, Paul gathers representative brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord and returns them to Jerusalem, fulfilling the reversal of Babel and the eschatological visions of the prophets. His call to parallel the servant of Isaiah 49 is connected to Isaiah's own theological perspectives that are drawn from the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel, and in carrying out the mission of the servant to the nations, Paul moves the Tower of Babel reversal narrative forward. While it should not be categorically said that Paul is directly attempting to reverse the Tower of Babel itself, his perspective on the world, its eschatological direction, and the things which characterize his mission derive from and depend on the theological perspectives of Genesis 10 and 11 that he is undoubtedly familiar with. The core theological perspectives of Paul's mission are all influenced by the theology of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel accounts, and these stories set the stage for his goals and decision-making throughout his missionary journeys.

Genesis 10 & 11 and Paul

At this point, it can be said that Paul's work bears the influence of the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel accounts. The geographical and theological perspectives put forward by Genesis 10:1-11:9 are evident throughout the Old Testament and the work of Paul's contemporaries, are key context for the mission of the New Testament church and are consistent with and foundational to Paul's perceived missionary purposes as put forth by purpose problem scholars. However, considering the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel to be comprehensive factors of influence on Paul's missionary mindset relies on connecting the passages to the logistical aspects of his journeys, as well as demonstrating how the framework of thinking that is founded on these passages offers insight into Pauline thought and writing. With representative universalism in mind, the Table of Nations offers a viable basis for Paul's missionary journeys. Indeed, the geographical framework laid by Genesis 10 provides reasoning for one of Paul's most puzzling purposes—that is, his travel to Spain. Further, the framework of thinking that is established in Genesis 10:1-11:9 is visible throughout Paul's writings; when the apostle addresses the implications of salvation, details logistical concerns, and elsewhere. Recognizing these connections rounds out the defense of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel as comprehensive factors of influence on the missionary journeys of Paul, accounting for both logistical plans and theological purposes.

Geographical Patterns

Scott writes, "To understand the Jewish world, we must turn to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, the fundamental passage which supplies the basis for world geography and

ethnography both in the Old Testament and in later Jewish writings.”¹⁰⁰ Much has been said about the influence of the Table of Nations tradition on Paul’s Jewish contemporaries and his own theological perspectives. It is reasonable, therefore, to investigate this foundational passage’s influence on Paul’s logistical plans within his missionary journeys. There is, however, an intermediary consideration that will allow the connections between the locations that Paul visits and the Table of Nations to become clear—that is, the exposition of the Table of Nations by the famed Jewish historian Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.120-147. Josephus’ appropriation of the Table of Nations offers an updated tradition, connecting the nations of the Table to the current names of the nations in his day.¹⁰¹ In his reading of the Table, Josephus suggests that some of the nations retained their original names, but many of these nations are currently known by different designations due to their Greek equivalents. For instance, he writes, “For Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, but were then called Gomerites...” (*Ant.* 1.123). He proceeds to clarify the Greek names of many nations within Genesis 10, and for the remainder of his writing uses the names “after the manner of the Greeks, to please [his] readers” (*Ant.* 1.29). Josephus’ preference in listing the names of the nations according to their Greek designations offers an explanation for the naming conventions throughout the New Testament—written in Greek, the nations within the book of Acts and Paul’s letters retain their Greek designations, though they may refer to territories that originally held different names according to the Table of Nations. Upon a review of these names, Scott correlates the locations that Paul travels on his missionary journeys with the sons of Japheth from the Table of Nations as identified by Josephus. Leaving Antioch, Paul’s first missionary

100. Scott, “Luke’s Geographical Horizon,” 499.

101. *Ibid.*, 515.

journey focuses on Cyprus and Asia Minor (Josephus connects these to the sons of Japheth, c.f.

Ant. 1.122, 128), and outlining Paul's second missionary journey, Scott writes,

The apostle focuses almost exclusively on Asia Minor and Europe, which together form the traditional territory of Japheth.... Starting from Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41) and proceeding ever westward, Paul took the overland route to Derbe and Lystra (16:1), passed through 'the region of Phrygia and Galatia' (v. 6a), and, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia (v. 6b) went on to Troas (v. 8). When he received the 'Macedonian call' in Troas (c. 9), Paul then crossed from Asia Minor into Macedonia (vv. 11-12), his first station in Europe (16:13-17:15). Encountering opposition in Macedonia, however, Paul continued his missionary activity in Achaia (17:16-18:17) before returning by way of Ephesus to Antioch (18:18-22). Therefore, Paul's first independent missionary journey begins where, according to Josephus (cf. *Ant.* 1.123), the Japhethites began their settlement (Cilicia), and it proceeds in the same westward direction through Asia Minor and Europe as the Japhethites originally migrated.¹⁰²

Interestingly, the territory that the Holy Spirit forbids Paul to enter (Acts 16:6) is connected by Josephus to the sons of Shem (i.e. the Lydians who descend from Lud, *Ant.* 1.144). It would seem if Scott's analysis is correct, that Paul's mission in Acts is particularly concerned with preaching the gospel to the sons of Japheth. The structure of Acts overall supports this assumption well. Acts 2:1-8:25 details the mission of the church to the descendants of Shem as the gospel is preached in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, which includes deportees from the Mesopotamian nations.¹⁰³ Acts 8:26-40 indicates the mission of the church to the descendants of Ham as Philip shares the gospel with the Ethiopian Eunuch from the territory of Cush (*Ant.* 1.131). Acts 9:1-28:31, following the missionary activities of Paul, details the mission of the church to the descendants of Japheth. The geographical paradigm set forth for the mission of the church to the nations in Acts offers a sense of territoriality for Paul's missionary work, focusing on the sons of Japheth.

102. *Ibid.*, 539.

103. *Ibid.*, 532.

With this geographical perspective in mind, clarity can be brought to Paul's intentions to travel past Rome onward to Spain. Consider the apostle's declaration to travel to Spain in Romans 15:22-24: "This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while." Cranfield suggests that "this is why" refers back to what is said in verse 19: "that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ," a notion agreed upon by Morris if not pushed further to include verse 17 and following.¹⁰⁴ Illyricum sits at the westernmost part of the area in which Paul had been ministering up to this point.¹⁰⁵ It is Paul's progression of mission westward throughout the regions of the sons of Japheth that has hindered his coming to Rome, as Paul's ministry from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum needed to be fulfilled—that is, the nations of Japheth between Jerusalem and Rome needed to be reached before he could continue westward. Spain, however, has always been his goal as it represents the westernmost reaches of the nations belonging to the sons of Japheth (c.f. Cadiz, *Ant.* 1.122).

Beyond the consistency of these verses' claim with a geographical orientation around the sons of Japheth, Romans 15:19 offers additional support for the Table of Nations as Paul's geographical paradigm. Knox, as noted in the introduction, argues of Paul's remark that he has fulfilled the ministry "from Jerusalem and all the way around (*kyklo*) to Illyricum" that "all the way around" is better understood as "in a circular manner," and from this concludes that Paul's intentions were to travel in a circle through Asia Minor and Europe, back through Northern

104. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 516.

105. John McRay, "Illyricum (Place)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 388.

Africa and Egypt, returning to Jerusalem. However, there are a few background considerations that perhaps shift the significance of *kyklo* from indicating Paul's geographical intentions as circling the Mediterranean Sea to suggesting that Paul's geographical considerations are based on the Table of Nations perspective of the world. Throughout the Old Testament, *kyklo* is often used to describe the nations or peoples surrounding or circling Jerusalem (c.f. Ez 5:5, 6; Zec 12:2; Je 4:17; 6:3). Scott suggests that this is indicative of the Table of Nations tradition,¹⁰⁶ which as noted in previous chapters views Jerusalem at the geographical center of the known world—the nations of the Table listed in a manner proceeding outward and around the city. Ezekiel 5:5 is a prominent parallel: “Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around (*kyklo*) her.’” There are several other words that Paul might have used to describe his journey here rather than this relatively uncommon descriptor, and Scott takes this to suggest Paul intentionally chose *kyklo* to emphasize the centrality of Jerusalem in a manner consistent with the Table of Nations perspective on the world.¹⁰⁷

Paul's ministry as geographically oriented around the sons of Japheth fits well with the theological narrative set forth by Genesis 10:1-11:9 that underpins the apostle's key missionary purposes. At the Tower of Babel, the nations of the earth reject God's authority and are divided and scattered. Out of this division, God calls the people of Israel to their unique purpose as a blessing to the dispersed nations, listed in a representative fashion by the Table of Nations. Throughout the history of Israel, the prophets envision a reversal of the consequences of the Tower of Babel in which God will reclaim the scattered nations to himself and restore his authority and relationship with all the earth. The New Testament claims that through Jesus and

106. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 138.

107. *Ibid.*, 138-139.

his followers, the fulfillment of this restoration begins—the events of Pentecost demonstrate that God’s vessel and chosen instrument for restoring his relationship with the dispersed nations is the missional activity of the church as Christ-followers reach beyond Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. When Paul describes his calling as apostle to the Gentiles, he indicates his role in God’s restoration mission. Paul is reclaiming the nations of Japheth so that through Jesus they may seek God and be restored to a relationship with him again. Bringing in the full number of Gentiles in order to hasten the return of Christ becomes a much more achievable goal when recognizing that Paul is one of several missionaries, each dedicated to reaching different lines of the Table of Nations. As Paul follows the representative standards set by the Table of Nations, he preaches the name of Jesus to cities which he considers to be representative of the sons of Japheth, fulfilling his ministry to these nations from Jerusalem westward to Spain.

Pauline Epistles

Recognizing that Paul’s demonstrated theological purposes and logistical decision-making are commonly influenced by Genesis 10:1-11:9 ultimately serves as context for reading Paul’s work within the New Testament. Already, many cases where the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel are necessary context for Paul’s writing and words have been mentioned (c.f. Ac 17:26-27; Ro 11:25-27, 15:16-23; Ga 1:15-16, 2:9; Eph 3:8-9, etc.); however, once an awareness of these theological and geographical perspectives is established in the minds of New Testament readers, the imprint of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel on the full corpus of Pauline writing becomes evident. Consider a few selections of Paul’s words which, when viewed with these perspectives in mind, take on new meaning and offer additional insight.

Begin with Galatians 3:27-28, of which Neal Blough argues the meaning and implications of salvation are correlated with the Tower of Babel and the promise to Abraham

which aims to reverse the Babel events:¹⁰⁸ “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” Abraham’s calling to restore blessing to the scattered nations of the earth is fulfilled through Christ, as the divisions which distinguish the nations and people are no longer what defines their identity. Rather, “Those who belong to the community of baptized believers... now stand in a fundamentally different relationship,”¹⁰⁹ united with Christ; and “through our union with Christ we have now inherited this privileged status”¹¹⁰ as the offspring of Abraham. God calls the offspring of Abraham to be his treasured possession, distinct from the nations of the world following the events of the Tower of Babel. Now, Paul declares that through Christ the nations are being reclaimed as God’s possession once more. In a similar manner, Ephesians 2:11-13 calls upon the reversal of the Tower of Babel as an implication of salvation and builds upon the ideas of Galatians 3: “Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh... were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Francis Foulkes suggests that Paul’s words indicate that the purpose of Christ’s work “involves the bringing of those individuals, whatever their race or background, into unity in the people of God.”¹¹¹ He further points to Paul’s remarks as an indication of the transformation of the

108. Neal Blough, “From the Tower of Babel to the Peace of Jesus Christ: Christological, Ecclesiological and Missiological Foundations for Peacemaking,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76, no. 1 (2002): 7.

109. Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 283.

110. *Ibid.*, 292.

111. Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 86.

Gentiles, who in the past were nations separated from God but now have come to be connected with the people of God.¹¹² The effect of the gospel is to bring those nations who were far off—to the ends of the earth—into the people of God. Indeed, Paul reaffirms this goal in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: “All this from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself...” Paul’s language about the impact of the gospel is often connected to a shift in the status of the nations from those who were separated and distant from God to those who have been reconciled to God and reclaimed as his possession once more. As Blough suggests, “Not only is Babel being healed... as seen in Galatians, Romans or Ephesians, but all of creation is renewed and restored once again through the death and resurrection of Christ.” The imprint of Genesis 10:1-11:9 on Paul’s understanding of the meaning and implications of salvation are evident.

Note further how many of the logistical statements Paul makes can be tied to or even clarified when recognizing that the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel have been formative for Paul’s missional intentions. Recall the connections evident in Romans 15:19-20: “...that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation.” Beginning in Jerusalem, Paul has preached the gospel to the nations representing the sons of Japheth all the way to the western border of his ministry up to this point—Illyricum. For this reason, he was formerly prevented (Rom 1:13) but is now able to move onward to Rome, through the territory of Japheth in Europe to the westernmost region of the sons of Japheth—Spain. Perhaps, even, Paul’s efforts to avoid

112. Ibid.

building on someone else's foundation is also linked to his designated territory as the apostle to the sons of Japheth. Consider 2 Corinthians 10:13-16 as another example:

But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you.... We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence.

The area of influence God assigned in light of the impact that Genesis 10:1-11:9 has on the mission of Paul may be linked to the territory of Japheth, consistent with the scope and direction Paul indicates here.¹¹³ Again, further evidence can be offered from 2 Corinthians 10:15 that Paul's efforts to avoid building on someone else's foundation is linked to avoiding locations that are not within his designated territory. Recognizing the perspectives that Paul holds as a result of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel brings clarity and additional insight into the reasons why Paul makes seemingly odd logistical statements such as these and offers context that otherwise would be missed.

Once an awareness of these theological and geographical perspectives that influence Paul's missionary journeys is established in the minds of New Testament readers, the imprint of the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel on the full corpus of Pauline writing becomes evident. Paul's understanding of the meaning and implications of salvation is rooted in the theological narrative set forth by the Tower of Babel, and the apostle's logistical statements and ambitions can be explained and clarified by his role in ministering to the territory of Japheth defined by the Table of Nations. For these reasons, the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel should be

113. Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," 539.

considered comprehensive underlying factors of influence on the missionary journeys of Paul, accounting for both his logistical plans and theological emphases.

Implications of the Solution to the Purpose Problem

The Table of Nations and Tower of Babel stand as a common factor from which Paul's theological perspectives and geographical decision making derive, but it remains to be seen how this holistic solution to the purpose problem carries relevance for modern Christians. In light of the influence of these passages that has been traced and outlined in previous chapters, readers who recognize that Genesis 10:1-11:9 are necessary context for biblical study of the New Testament within and beyond Pauline literature should also be encouraged to investigate the influence of other foundational Old Testament passages on New Testament thought and writing in a similar way. Further, recognizing how the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel have influenced Paul's missionary purposes also impacts the missional activity of the modern church both in vision and practicality. The church plays a vital role in the narrative space between the inaugural reversal period of Babel at Pentecost and the consummation of its reversal in the New Jerusalem. As Luke, John, and Paul see the missionary activity of the church in proclaiming the gospel to the nations as the method by which this narrative moves forward, modern Christians should also be engaging in missional activity with this mindset.

Weerstra's investigation of the term *ethne* in his consideration of the church and Paul's mission to the nations draws several conclusions that cast vision for the missional activity of the modern church upon recognizing that Genesis 10:1-11:9 are foundational to the missionary purposes of Paul. He notes,

The *ethne*, in the sense of the Gentiles, of the peoples outside of Israel, especially outside the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, are the specific and essential objects of the Lord's mission imperative. The Gentile nations and the people of

those nations who do not yet have “the testimony unto them” of the Gospel of the Kingdom are to be discipled.¹¹⁴

Paul’s own missionary purposes reflect this conclusion. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul views the nations outside of Israel as essential people groups to whom the gospel must be proclaimed. Through his declaration of the gospel to the nations he visits, the apostle participates in the reclamation of the nations and restoration of their relationship with God. Paul’s understanding of representative universalism pushes the apostle to focus primarily on the nations and people groups who have not yet had the gospel proclaimed to them. Recall Romans 15:19-20, in which the apostle notes how he has fulfilled his ministry from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. This fulfillment is not in that all the people of these nations have heard the message and turned to God, but that representatives of each area have responded to the gospel and are now equipped to continue Paul’s ministry in their sphere of influence. Thus, the apostle does not stay in these areas but turns his attention to new frontiers of missional activity where the gospel has yet to be proclaimed (c.f. 2 Cor 10:13-16). The vision that Paul has for missionary work is to focus on unreached people groups and adamantly work to share the gospel with these nations as the Tower of Babel reversal narrative progresses. According to Weerstra,

The implication is that the Lord commissioned His Church to make disciples of (or among) all the peoples of the earth. The Lord is not commanding mass evangelism in general, indiscriminate of the ethnographic cultural and language heritage of the people to be discipled or evangelized. The focus of the imperative of the Lord’s commission is on making disciples of and among all the peoples of the earth.¹¹⁵

This does not mean that individual responsibility for evangelism to any and all who have not responded to the gospel is ignored; rather, the practical missionary activity of the church must

114. Hans M. Weerstra, “Mission to the Nations: A Biblical Word Study of Ethnos,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 9, no. 3 (1992): 101.

115. *Ibid.*

maintain a heavy emphasis on reaching all of the unreached nations of the earth with the good news, that the “Church of Jesus Christ will be firmly planted in every people group, in all the nations,”¹¹⁶ to hasten the arrival of the second coming of Christ (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10).

It would seem, therefore, that practical missionary activity should involve church planting among people groups who have not yet heard the gospel, allowing those churches to continue the role of discipling their nation. Upon his own investigation of a holistic solution to the purpose problem, Last draws a similar conclusion:

The apostle regarded the establishment and consolidation of congregations as tasks that followed naturally from successful preaching and believed that these objectives required fulfillment before the *parousia*.... The apostle understood the purpose of his mission as preparing individuals for the *eschaton*—which meant getting individuals to believe in Christ and getting them involved in local Christ-believing communities before the *Parousia*.¹¹⁷

Paul fulfilled his missionary purposes by establishing churches in the nations where he proclaimed the gospel—these churches continued the work of discipleship as Paul himself continued the missional work of reclaiming new people groups to God. Thus, recognizing the influence that the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel have on Paul not only provides necessary context for biblical study of the New Testament but also offers visional and practical insight into the missional activity of the modern church. Visionally, the church ought to focus on unreached people groups and adamantly work to share the gospel with these nations as the Tower of Babel reversal narrative progresses. Practically, this means church planting among people groups who have not yet heard the gospel, allowing those churches to continue the role of discipling their nation.

116. Ibid.

117. Last, “What Purpose Did Paul Understand His Mission to Serve?”, 324.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to offer a holistic solution to the purpose problem, providing a perspective that accounts for both the theological perspectives of Paul's missional work and geographical plans of Paul's missionary journeys. This study has established the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel as a common factor from which Paul's theological perspectives and geographical decision making derive by demonstrating the following: (1) Genesis 10 and 11 should be considered passages of influence throughout the Old Testament and for the apostle Paul's contemporaries; this in light of the passages' direct connection to the geographical and historical perspectives that establish the Abrahamic Covenant, characterize the prophetic hope for a reclamation of the scattered nations under God, and lay a framework for the geographical and theological commentaries of Second Temple writers. (2) Genesis 10 and 11 provide key context for the mission of the New Testament church and other New Testament writers; this in light of the passages' contextual connection to the seminal missional event of the church in Acts 2, the remainder of Luke's writing, the apocalypse of John, and the writings of other authors throughout the New Testament. (3) Genesis 10 and 11 are consistent with and provide context for the missionary mindset of Paul; this in light of Paul's four major missionary purposes—that is, his work as apostle to the Gentiles, his efforts to hasten the second coming of Christ, his practice of representative universalism, and his calling parallel to the servant of Isaiah 49—each deriving from the geographical and theological perspectives of the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel. (4) Genesis 10 and 11 provide a logical geographical framework for the missionary work of Paul; this in light of the geographical patterns of Paul's missionary journeys which reflect an emphasis on the sons of Japheth. Further, considering Pauline epistles with this perspective in mind offers significant insight into Pauline thought and writing, with the apostle's

understanding of the meaning and implications of salvation rooted in the theological narrative set forth by the Tower of Babel, and the apostle's logistical statements and ambitions explained and clarified by his role in ministering to the territory of Japheth as defined by the Table of Nations. Ultimately, the results of this study build a foundation from which future work can gain insight into Pauline thought and encourages a renewed emphasis on understanding Genesis 10 and 11 when considering biblical study of the New Testament and the missionary activity of the modern church.

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