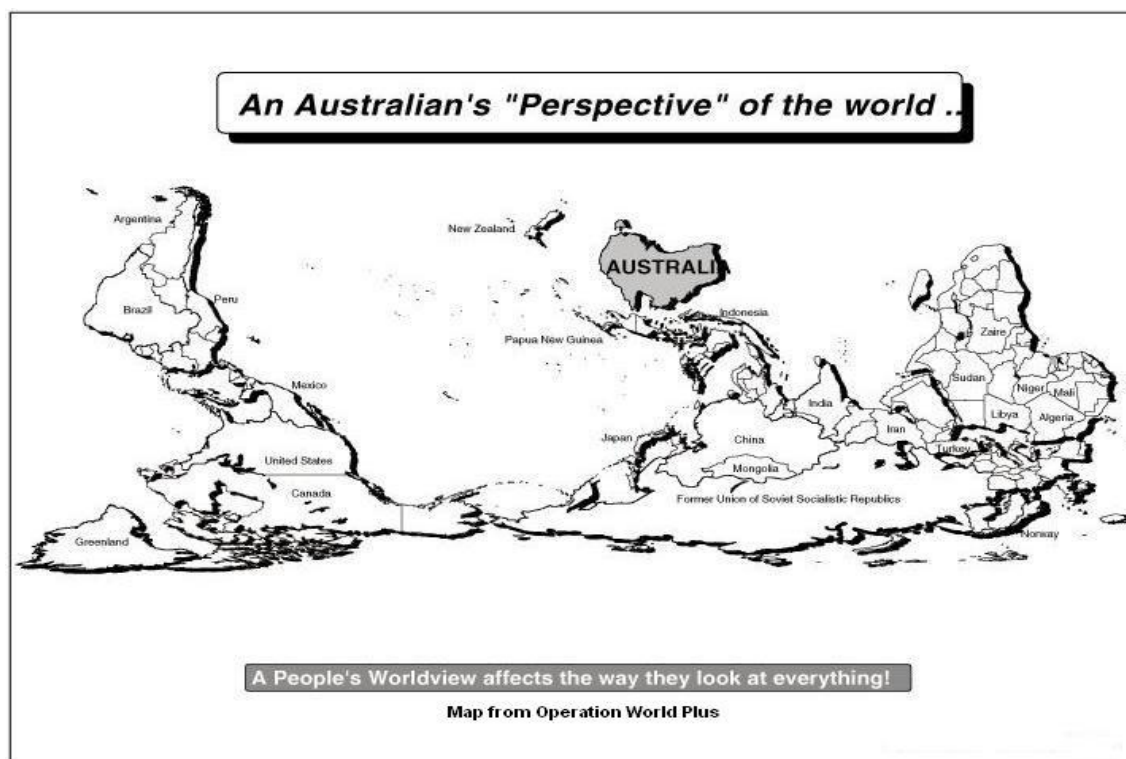


Chapter 6: Biblical Cultures of the World

The way you view the world can change your entire concept. As a missionary who is given a mandate to go and make disciples of all NATIONS, you MUST begin to grow a biblical worldview in your heart. For instance, please take a look at the below map, which shows an Australian's perspective of the world.



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ORIGIN OF CULTURES

We are aware that there exists countless number of resources on cultural anthropology studies around us today. While such studies overflow in our highly informative society, most of those discoveries are made on retrospective attempts to retrace our origins. However, to learn of the cultures and where they have originated from, we'll need to look into the Bible and see what God's word has to say about this issue. *The Bible tells us that it all began with Noah and his three sons*, after destruction of the mankind by flood. And their names were Shem, Ham and Japheth.

"The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth." (Genesis 9:18-19)

Geographical categories

1. Shem is likely to be an ancestor of today's Jews, Arabs and Asians.
2. Ham is likely to be an ancestor of today's Africans and Palestinians (Canaanites).
3. Japheth is likely to be an ancestor of today's Europeans, European settlers in Americas, Australia and Africa, and a part of Indians.

Meanings and occupations

Each of three sons of Noah and their descendents must have somehow lived according to and fulfilled the meanings of their names.

1. Shem and his descendents

- Shem means 'name.'
- At least in the beginning they must have been committed to carry on the name and worship of Jehovah God, discharging a duty of the oldest son's family line.
- For this purpose, it is likely that in the beginning at least they should have tried to reside near the mountains to have an easy access to offer sacrifices to Jehovah. They must have been in charge of offering sacrifices to God, following the lifestyle of Noah.
- And the sacrifices were offered on the mountains:
 - a. Mountain in the region of Moriah (Genesis 22:2)
 - b. Field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah (Numbers 23:14)
 - c. Top of Peor (Numbers 23:28)
 - d. Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20)
 - e. Jesus praying on the mountainside (Luke 6:12)
 - f. Mt. Transfiguration (Luke 9:28)
 - g. Jesus crucified in Jerusalem, a hill (Isaiah 10:32, Matthew 16:21, Luke 9:31)
- Even up until today, keeping their 'faces' (name, honor) means more than a world to them.

2. Ham and his descendents

- Ham means 'hot.'
- They are naturally passionate, optimistic and brave people.
- Must have settled in Mesopotamia plain and achieved the first civilization in history.
- Dealt with cultivation and farming.
- Even up until today, Africans love and are keepers of the lands.

3. Japheth and his descendents

- Japheth means 'God will expand.'
- They must have resided near sea and were known as maritime (sea) people (Genesis 10:5).
- They have been adventurous, creative and artistic people throughout history. Most of the latest modern inventions were attained by them.
- God's promise of success and expansion still rest on them.

THREE MAIN BIBLICAL CULTURES OF THE WORLD

1. Semite culture

- This culture was originated from the descendents of Shem, the first born of Noah (Genesis 10:21-31).
- Its inhabitants mostly spread throughout mountain areas of the Middle East and Asia.
- They developed the cuneiform characters.
- Cuneiform characters were written on clay tablets.
- Semites are of the clay culture. They loved clay (Isaiah 64:8).

2. Hamite culture

- This culture was originated from the descendents of Ham, the second born of Noah (Genesis 10:6-20).
- Ham's descendents most likely settled in Mesopotamia (Iraq and Kuwait of today) and had a community lifestyle for effective farming, which later developed into a system of 'boma' (Swahili word for 'village') and chiefs.
- Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-9), a descendant of Ham, was given an ability by God to make weapons and tools to protect mankind from the animals

since God allowed eating of meats (Genesis 9:3). However, he must have turned its use against his brothers to build his own kingdom (Genesis 10:8-12) and probably led a construction of the tower of Babel later (Genesis 11:1-9).

- Descendants of Cush are today's Sudanese, Ethiopians and those residing in part of Egypt (Isaiah 18:1-2).

3. Japhethite culture

- Descendants of Japheth, the third born of Noah (Genesis 10:2-5).
- They probably first began to inhabit near the Mediterranean Sea and later moved to other parts of today's Europe.
- Japhethites must have learned to live in some unfavorable circumstances and to develop strong characters while trying to settle down in maritime provinces.

After all, the origins of the cultures are explained in the Bible, particularly in Genesis chapter 10. All of us have come from one branch or another which began with those three men - Shem, Ham and Japheth. In other words, all of us are simply long-distance relatives, who once must have known and worshipped Jehovah together in the beginning. Nevertheless, due to our sinful nature and wickedness of our heart, we all began to go astray from Him over a great period of times.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

And Canaan, the last of son of Ham, must have played a role to bring covert idols into this world in cooperation with his nephew, Nimrod, who had an ambition to take over the world in his power. It is of no wonder that Noah cursed Canaan (NOT HAM) and his descendants (Genesis 9:24-25). The people of 'Canaanites' and the spirit of 'Canaan' appear in many faces and names both in history and the Bible. They still exist today among some of the gruesome Palestinians who practice youth suicide bombings and other demonic rituals.

Throughout the history, people of these three different cultures have been colliding with one another. Even in the epic of crucifying our Lord Jesus, the three cultures are obviously represented. For instance, Jews (Semites) handed Jesus over to the Romans to crucify him. Then who were the Romans? They were the Japhethites! And Simon of Cyrene, a Hamite, who helped Christ carry the cross at the last lap appear before the crucifixion. Cyrene is today's Libya. The fact of the matter is that we (Semites, Hamites and Japhethites) were all represented there at the climax moment of God's redemption plan. And our gracious Lord died for all of us coming from all different kinds of cultures!

Thousands upon thousands of sub-cultures which branched out of these main three trunks of biblical cultures exist today. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ remains the Lord and Savior to each and every one of these different cultures of the world today. And YOU are a missionary whom the Lord has chosen to take this

message of Good News to the nations, to our lost relatives scattered somewhere in this world!

Do not be afraid to go to a different culture to share the Good News. Holy Spirit will go with you to remind that relative of yours in the mission field, who has been so lost for long and simply forgotten where he/she has come from.