

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Doctrine of Humanity

Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God

UNIT 8

The Unity of the Human Race and the Headship of Adam

Lesson 23

One Blood, One Race

The Unity of Humanity in Adam

“All Human Beings Descend from One Man and One Woman”

Key Texts: Acts 17:26; Genesis 1:27–28; 10:1–32; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Revelation 7:9–10

“He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.”

Acts 17:26, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Unit 8 opens at a theologically and pastorally critical junction in the Anthropology series: the doctrine of the unity of the human race. The preceding units have established what the human creature is (Units 1–4), how it stands in its original state and under the covenant of works (Unit 5), what its creaturely identity in gender, marriage, and complementarity looks like (Unit 6), and what its vocation in the created order consists in (Unit 7). Unit 8 now addresses the question of the human community's solidarity, the theological basis for the claim that all human beings, across every cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and historical boundary, constitute a single family, a single race, descended from a single pair of first parents and accountable to a single God. This doctrine of human unity is simultaneously one of the most practically relevant and one of the most theologically contested doctrines in the contemporary moment: practically relevant because the question of how human beings relate to one another across ethnic and racial lines is among the most urgent questions the church must address in the contemporary world, and theologically contested because the scientific and cultural narratives about human origins that dominate the contemporary academy have frequently challenged the biblical account's insistence on the monogenesis of the human race.

The doctrine of monogenesis, the teaching that all human beings descend from a single pair of first parents, Adam and Eve, is not merely a scientific hypothesis about human biological origins, though it is that; it is a theological claim with comprehensive implications for the doctrines of the image of God, original sin, the universal offer of the gospel, and the eschatological unity of the redeemed community. If the human race does not descend from a single pair, the Pauline theology of Romans 5:12–21, the doctrine that sin entered the world through one man and that death spread to all men, loses its coherent grounding. If there was no historical Adam through whom the whole of humanity became implicated in the fall, then the imputation of Adam's sin to the whole of his posterity has no adequate structural basis. And if the whole of humanity does not descend from a single pair of first parents, the biblical account's consistent insistence on the unity of the human race as the theological foundation for the universal offer of the gospel is undermined at its source. The doctrine of monogenesis is not a peripheral detail; it is a load-bearing wall in the theological structure of the entire biblical account of humanity, sin, and redemption.

This lesson proceeds in six sections. We begin with the biblical testimony to human monogenesis: the creation narrative's account of Adam and Eve as the first parents of all humanity, the genealogies that trace the entire human family to that single pair, and the Pauline theology's explicit dependence on the historical Adam as the representative of the entire human race. We then examine the theological significance of human unity: why the fact that all human beings descend from one man matters for the doctrines of original sin, the gospel's universal scope, and the human dignity of every member of the race. The third section addresses the challenge of polygenism: the theory that humanity descended from multiple first pairs, its scientific and hermeneutical claims, and the theological reasons why the Reformed and evangelical tradition has consistently rejected it. The fourth section examines the implications of human unity for the church's engagement with race and ethnicity: the biblical account's comprehensive dismantling of racial hierarchy and its affirmation of ethnic diversity within human unity. The fifth section examines the table of nations in Genesis 10: the biblical account of how the single human family diversified into the multiplicity of peoples, languages, and cultures that constitute the human community's present richness. We close with the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10: the great multitude from every nation and tribe and people and tongue that displays the full spectrum of the human family's ethnic diversity in the unified worship of the one God.

A note on the cultural urgency of this lesson: the doctrine of the unity of the human race is simultaneously the most theologically comprehensive and the most practically urgent foundation for the church's engagement with the race and ethnicity questions that the contemporary cultural and political landscape has made so intensely contested. The church that does not hold the doctrine of monogenesis with theological seriousness will not have the theological resources to engage the race question with either the consistency or the depth that the gospel requires. And the church that holds monogenesis with theological seriousness but does not draw out its specific ethical and pastoral implications, the specific claims it makes about the equal dignity of every ethnic community,

the theological absurdity of racism, and the eschatological vision of the redeemed community's ethnic richness, has held the doctrine without exercising its power. This lesson aims to provide both.

I. The Biblical Testimony to Human Monogenesis

One Man, One Woman, One Family: The Creation Narrative and the Genealogical Witness

A. *The Creation Narrative: Adam and Eve as the Progenitors of All Humanity*

The biblical account of the origin of the human race is unambiguous in its assertion of monogenesis: the human family descends from a single pair of first parents. Genesis 1:27 declares that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (NASB 1995), a single creative act bringing into existence the two parents of the human family in their complementary forms. Genesis 2:7 describes the specific creation of the first man: “then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” And Genesis 2:21–22 describes the specific creation of the first woman from the first man’s own body. The creation narrative’s account is not a general description of the origin of human life as a biological species; it is the specific account of the creation of two specific persons, named Adam and Eve, who are the progenitors of all subsequent human life.

Genesis 3:20’s statement, “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living” (NASB 1995), is the creation narrative’s own explicit declaration of Eve’s role as the progenitor of the entire human family. The name Eve (Chavah, חַוָּה, from the root *chayah*, to live) is explained as deriving from the fact that she is “the mother of all the living”, all human beings who have ever lived, of every culture and every epoch, are descendants of the woman who received this name in the garden of Eden after the fall. The declaration is as comprehensive and as unambiguous as the biblical text can be: the entire human family shares a single maternal progenitor, and the theological unity of the human race is grounded in this biological fact.

The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 10–11 extend the monogenesis claim across the entire span of human history from the creation to the dispersion at Babel. Genesis 5’s genealogy traces an unbroken line from Adam through ten generations to Noah, establishing the continuous descent of the pre-flood human population from the single pair. Genesis 10’s table of nations traces the entire post-flood diversity of peoples, languages, and cultures to the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who are themselves descended from Noah and through him from Adam. The genealogical testimony is the biblical account’s most sustained argument for the unity of the human race: every human community, however geographically isolated, however culturally distinct, however linguistically remote from every other, is traced to the same source in the single family of Adam through Noah. The human family tree, however vast its present canopy, has a single root.

B. *The Pauline Theology: Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15*

The most theologically consequential New Testament affirmation of human monogenesis is Paul’s argument in Romans 5:12–21, which builds the entire doctrine of original sin and the imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity on the foundational assumption that Adam is the single progenitor of the entire human race. The argument’s logic is explicit: “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (v. 12, NASB 1995). The “one man” is not a representative figure standing for a group of first humans who collectively inaugurated the human condition of sin; he is the single individual whose single act of transgression introduced sin into the world and through whom that sin spread to all his posterity. The argument’s movement from “the one man” to “all men” presupposes that the “all men” are in fact the posterity of the “one man”, that the universal scope of the death that sin introduced is the direct consequence of the universal descent of the human family from the one man through whom sin entered.

The parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:15–19 further confirms the monogenetic character of Paul’s argument. The grace of God and the gift of justification that comes through the Last Adam (Jesus Christ) are offered to the same “many” who received condemnation and death through the first Adam’s transgression: “For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many” (v. 15, NASB 1995). The “many” on both sides of the parallel is the

same group, the entire human family descended from Adam. The universality of the condemnation (all who descend from Adam share in his guilt and death) and the universality of the gospel offer (all who are in Christ receive his righteousness and life) are both grounded in the monogenetic unity of the human race. If not all human beings descend from Adam, the condemnation is not universal; if the condemnation is not universal, the gospel offer cannot be genuinely universal; and the entire architecture of Romans 5's argument collapses without the monogenetic foundation.

1 Corinthians 15:22 provides the second major Pauline statement of the Adam-all humans relationship: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (NASB 1995). The parallelism is perfect: the "all" who die in Adam and the "all" who are made alive in Christ are the same comprehensive category, every member of the human family. And the "in Adam" presupposes the solidarity of the human family in the first man: the dying "in Adam" is not a metaphor for the general human condition of mortality but the theological description of the consequence of the representative act of the single progenitor whose posterity all human beings are. Acts 17:26's declaration in the Areopagus address is Paul's most direct statement of the monogenetic unity of the human race in a non-soteriological context: "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." Every nation, the entire diversity of the world's peoples and cultures, made from one man. The monogenesis is not a specifically Jewish or covenantal claim; it is Paul's anthropological claim to the philosophers of Athens.

"He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth."

Acts 17:26, NASB 1995

II. The Theological Significance of Human Unity

Why Monogenesis Matters for Sin, the Gospel, and Human Dignity

A. *Human Unity and the Doctrine of Original Sin*

The theological significance of human monogenesis is most immediately visible in its relationship to the doctrine of original sin. The doctrine that all human beings are born as sinners, bearing the guilt and the corruption of Adam's transgression as their own, depends on the claim that all human beings are descended from Adam and therefore genuinely implicated in Adam's act as members of his posterity. The Westminster Confession's account of the fall's consequences (chapter 6) is explicit: "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation." The phrase "root of all mankind" establishes the monogenetic claim as the structural foundation of the imputation: Adam and Eve are the root because every subsequent human being descends from them, and the guilt and the corruption are imputed and conveyed to the posterity precisely because they are the posterity, the descendants of the ones who sinned.

The specific mechanism of the imputation, whether it is grounded in the realistic claim that all humanity was seminally present in Adam and therefore genuinely participated in his sin, or in the federalist claim that Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity by divine decree on the basis of his representative headship, is a matter of intra-Reformed debate that Lesson 24 will address in full. What is not debated within the Reformed tradition is the structural necessity of the monogenetic claim for any account of the imputation: if there are human beings who do not descend from Adam, then whatever principle imputes Adam's guilt to his posterity does not apply to those human beings, and the universality of the condemnation that Romans 5:12 asserts is undermined. The doctrine of original sin requires the doctrine of monogenesis, and any challenge to monogenesis is therefore a challenge to the foundational claim of the entire hamartiology.

The same logic applies to the covenantal account of the fall that Lesson 15 developed: Adam stood in the covenant of works as the representative of the entire human race, so that his disobedience would determine the covenant standing of all his posterity. The covenant of works' federal headship is a headship over all humanity, and that headship is grounded in the fact that all humanity descends from the one man who stood as their representative. A polygenistic account of human origins, one that posits multiple first pairs of whom only some are the descendants of Adam, would require the extraordinary claim that some human beings are in the covenant of works' condemnation while others are not, on the basis of their biological descent from one first pair rather than another. This is theologically incoherent and soteriologically catastrophic: it would imply a fragmented rather than universal condemnation, a fragmented rather than universal gospel offer, and a Savior whose representative work addresses only the posterity of one first pair rather than the whole of the human family.

B. Human Unity and the Universal Gospel Offer

The second major theological significance of human monogenesis is its grounding of the universal offer of the gospel. If all human beings descend from Adam, if there is genuinely one human race, not many, then the gospel offer that addresses the one human race in its Adamic solidarity is genuinely universal: there is no human being to whom the gospel does not speak, no human community that stands outside the scope of the redemption that the Last Adam accomplished, no ethnic or cultural or historical identity that excludes its bearer from the family of humanity for whom Christ died and to whom the gospel is directed. The universality of the gospel offer is grounded in the universality of the human family's Adamic solidarity: the same solidarity that makes every human being a sinner in Adam makes every human being the specific object of the gospel that addresses sinners.

Acts 17:26's connection between the monogenetic unity of the human race ("He made from one man every nation of mankind") and the universal call to repentance (v. 30: "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent") establishes this connection explicitly in Paul's Areopagus address. The "all people everywhere" who are called to repentance are the "every nation of mankind" who descend from one man: the universal scope of the call to repentance is grounded in the universal scope of the monogenetic unity. There is no nation, no people, no language group that stands outside the scope of either the human family's Adamic solidarity or the gospel's universal call. The Great Commission's instruction to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19) is premised on the same monogenetic unity: the nations are the differentiated expressions of the single human family, and the gospel is directed to every expression of that family because every human being is a member of the one human race that Adam represents and that the Last Adam redeems.

The monogenetic unity of the human race is also the foundation for the church's proclamation of the universal scope of the atonement's sufficiency. Whatever the extent of the atonement's effectual application, a matter on which the Reformed tradition has held its own intra-confessional debates, the atonement's sufficiency for every member of the human race is grounded in the fact that the Last Adam's representative work addressed the same human family that the first Adam's representative transgression affected. The gospel can be genuinely offered to every human being because every human being is a member of the one family for which the Last Adam died; and the offer can be genuinely universal because the Adamic solidarity that grounds the condemnation is the same Adamic solidarity that grounds the scope of the redemptive provision.

III. Against Polygenism: The Theory of Multiple First Pairs

The Biblical, Theological, and Scientific Arguments Against the Polygenist Challenge

A. The Polygenist Claim and Its Contemporary Forms

Polygenism is the theory that the human race did not descend from a single pair of first parents but from multiple first pairs, or from a population of founding individuals rather than from two specific ancestors. In its historical form, polygenism was often motivated by racist ideologies that sought to ground the alleged inferiority of some racial groups in their separate and inferior biological origin from different ancestral pairs. This form of polygenism

was rightly condemned by the church and by the scientific community as both theologically heretical and empirically false. In its contemporary form, polygenism appears not as a racist ideology but as the interpretation of population genetics data that some scientists and theologians have suggested is incompatible with the claim that all human beings descend from a single pair of ancestors. The contemporary polygenist argument does not typically claim that different racial groups have different origins; it claims that no two individuals could have been the sole genetic ancestors of the entire present human population without a genetic bottleneck that the population genetics data do not support.

The contemporary population genetics arguments for polygenism have been engaged by a number of Reformed and evangelical scholars, and the engagement has produced a significant body of theological, hermeneutical, and scientific literature. The specific scientific arguments, concerning the minimum effective population size, the diversity of the human genome, and the implications of the mitochondrial Eve and Y-chromosomal Adam research, are complex and contested technical matters that this lesson cannot adjudicate in full. What this lesson can establish with theological clarity is the reason why the polygenist conclusion is incompatible with the biblical account and with the Reformed theological tradition that derives its doctrine of original sin and the covenant of works from the biblical account's explicit and consistent affirmation of Adam as the single progenitor of the entire human race.

The hermeneutical dimension of the contemporary polygenist debate is as important as the scientific dimension, and it is the dimension that most directly concerns the biblical interpreter and the Reformed theologian. The question is not merely whether the population genetics data can be interpreted in a way that is compatible with the historical monogenesis of Adam and Eve, though this is a legitimate and important scientific question on which the available data may be more amenable to a monogenetic interpretation than the initial polygenist presentations suggested. The prior hermeneutical question is: what kind of reading does the biblical text require? And the answer to that question, established by the explicit and consistent testimony of the creation narrative, the genealogies, the Pauline theology of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, and the Acts 17:26 declaration, is that the biblical text requires a historical Adam who is the single progenitor of the entire human race. The interpreter who accepts the polygenist conclusion is not making a scientific adjustment to the biblical account; she is proposing a hermeneutical revision of the biblical account that the theological tradition's most careful interpreters have consistently recognized as incompatible with the doctrine of original sin, the covenant of works, and the federal headship of Adam.

B. *The Theological Arguments Against Polygenism*

The most decisive theological arguments against polygenism are the arguments from the internal coherence of the biblical account's doctrine of sin and redemption. Lesson 15's treatment of the covenant of works established that Adam stood as the representative of the entire human race, that his obedience or disobedience would determine the covenant standing of all his posterity. The federal headship is a headship over all humanity, not over a subgroup of humanity. If some human beings are not descended from Adam, they are not included in the scope of the federal headship, and the condemnation that the covenant of works' violation incurred does not extend to them. But Romans 5:12's assertion that death spread to all men, universally, without exception, requires that all men are in the scope of the Adam's federal headship; and that requires that all men are Adam's posterity; and that requires the monogenesis that the polygenist account denies.

The argument can be pressed further: if there are human beings who are not descended from Adam, they are not born as sinners in the relevant sense, they are not born bearing the imputed guilt of Adam's transgression or the inherited corruption of Adam's nature, because they do not descend from Adam. But the New Testament's universal description of the human condition, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), "there is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10), "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), does not allow for a subgroup of human beings who are not sinners in the relevant sense. The universality of the condemnation requires the universality of the Adamic solidarity, and the universality of the Adamic solidarity

requires the monogenesis that the polygenist account denies. The polygenist who wishes to maintain the universal condemnation of human beings must either ground the condemnation in something other than the Adamic federal headship (which would require a different account of original sin than the Reformed tradition provides) or accept the inconsistency of affirming universal condemnation while denying the monogenetic basis on which that condemnation rests.

This series holds the monogenetic account of human origins with the theological conviction that the biblical testimony and the coherence of the doctrine of original sin require, while acknowledging with intellectual honesty that the population genetics questions are complex and that the scientific community's engagement with those questions continues to develop. The Reformed interpreter who holds monogenesis is not thereby committed to a specific scientific account of the mechanism of the monogenesis, the specific time, the specific geography, or the specific biological processes through which the two first parents and all their descendants came to constitute the present human gene pool, but to the theological claim that a historical Adam and Eve are the progenitors of the entire human family, as the biblical text consistently and repeatedly asserts. The scientific questions about the mechanism are open to ongoing investigation; the theological claim about the fact is established by the biblical testimony.

“From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”

Acts 17:26, NIV

IV. One Race, Many Peoples: The Implications for Ethnicity and Race

How the Monogenetic Unity of the Human Race Grounds Both Racial Justice and Ethnic Celebration

A. The Theological Dismantling of Racial Hierarchy

The doctrine of human monogenesis provides the most comprehensive and the most theologically stable foundation for the dismantling of racial hierarchy that the history of Western thought possesses. If all human beings descend from a single pair of first parents, if there is genuinely one human race, not many, then the division of humanity into a hierarchy of races with different levels of worth, dignity, or capacity is not merely a sociological error or a moral failure; it is a theological heresy that contradicts the most basic datum of the biblical account of human origins. The various racial hierarchies that the history of Western science and Western society have constructed, the nineteenth-century polygenist racial science that grounded racial hierarchy in the alleged separate origins of different racial groups, the social Darwinism that grounded racial hierarchy in the alleged differential evolutionary fitness of different races, and the contemporary forms of racial essentialism that treat racial categories as natural and fixed rather than as social constructions that emerged within a history of power and injustice, all share the same fundamental error: they treat the diversity of human populations as the division of humanity into different kinds rather than the beautiful variety of a single family.

The Pauline proclamation of Acts 17:26, “He made from one man every nation of mankind”, is the most theologically comprehensive dismantling of racial hierarchy available in the biblical canon. The specific context is Paul’s address to the Athenian philosophers, who operated within a Greek cultural framework that regularly divided humanity into the superior (the Greeks, the free, the educated) and the inferior (the barbarians, the slaves, the uneducated). Paul’s proclamation that every nation, including the Greeks and the barbarians and every other distinction the Greek cultural hierarchy had constructed, descends from one man is the direct theological refutation of every form of hierarchical distinction between human groups on the basis of their alleged different origins or their alleged different levels of human worth. All human beings come from the same source; all bear the image of the same God; all stand under the same condemnation in Adam; and all are the objects of the same

gospel that the Last Adam's obedience has secured. There is no theological ground for the elevation of any human group above any other on the basis of its origin, its ethnicity, its cultural achievement, or any other characteristic that distinguishes one group from another within the one human family.

This lesson's engagement with the theology of race must be held alongside Lesson 10's treatment of racism as a theological heresy against the *imago Dei*. The monogenetic unity of the human race and the equal image-bearing dignity of every human being are complementary theological foundations for the church's unequivocal opposition to every form of racial hierarchy and racial injustice. The *imago Dei* establishes that every human being bears the image of the same God, regardless of ethnicity; the monogenesis establishes that every human being descends from the same first parents, regardless of cultural distinctiveness. Together they constitute the most comprehensive theological case against racism that the Christian tradition possesses, more comprehensive than any secular account of human equality, because they ground the equality not in social contract, not in political arrangement, and not in biological similarity alone, but in the theological reality of the shared image of God and the shared descent from the one humanity's first parents.

B. Diversity Within Unity: The Celebration of Ethnic Distinctiveness

The monogenetic unity of the human race does not erase or diminish ethnic diversity; it provides the theological framework within which ethnic diversity is properly understood and properly celebrated. The diversity of languages, cultures, customs, and peoples that constitutes the human community's present richness is not a fragmentation of the human family into separate and competing groups but the beautiful variety of a single family whose members express the image of God in the full richness of the cultural and linguistic and artistic distinctives that their specific histories, geographies, and communal traditions have produced. The ethnic diversity of the human family is the expression of the cultural mandate's filling of the earth: as the single human family spread across the earth, filled its diverse geographic and ecological environments, and developed the cultural and linguistic forms suited to those environments, the diversity that resulted was the expression of the mandate's commission rather than a departure from the unity that the mandate's single source establishes.

The affirmation of ethnic diversity within human unity has specific and important implications for the church's practice and mission. The church that understands the monogenetic unity of the human race will pursue the multiethnic community as a theological imperative rather than merely a cultural aspiration: the gathering of persons from every ethnic background in the single community of those who worship the one God through the one Lord Jesus Christ is the embodied expression of the human family's theological unity in Adam and its theological reunification in the Last Adam. The monoethnic congregation, the congregation that is ethnically homogeneous by deliberate exclusion rather than by demographic circumstance, is a theological anomaly: it embodies the fragmentation that sin introduced rather than the unity that the gospel restores, and it fails to display the eschatological vision of the redeemed community that Revelation 7:9–10 establishes as the goal of the mission.

At the same time, the affirmation of ethnic diversity within human unity means that the multiethnic community is not the homogeneous community that erases ethnic distinctiveness in the name of unity. The vision of Revelation 7:9–10 is not the vision of a monoethnic redeemed humanity but the vision of persons from "every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues", a community in which the ethnic distinctives are preserved rather than dissolved, brought into the common worship of the one God rather than sacrificed to the common culture. The proper expression of human unity within ethnic diversity is the community in which every ethnic group brings its specific cultural and linguistic and artistic contributions to the common table, not the community in which the dominant culture's expression of the human image is the standard to which every other expression is required to conform. The eschatological vision is the diversity of the human family's many expressions of the image of God, gathered in the unified worship of the one God whose image all bear.

V. The Table of Nations: Genesis 10 and the Diversity of Human Peoples

How the Single Human Family Became the Multitude of Peoples, Languages, and Cultures

A. *Genesis 10 and the Unity Beneath the Diversity*

Genesis 10's table of nations is one of the most extraordinary passages in the Old Testament, an ancient ethnographic survey that traces the entire diversity of the known world's peoples, languages, and lands to three sons of a single man, and through those three sons to the single family of humanity that Noah's ark preserved through the flood. The passage lists seventy peoples, a number that in the biblical tradition represents completeness and totality (cf. the seventy nations of Jewish tradition), and organizes them under the three sons of Noah: the descendants of Japheth (vv. 2–5), of Ham (vv. 6–20), and of Shem (vv. 21–31). Every people mentioned, however geographically distant from the others, however linguistically distinct, however culturally differentiated, is listed as a descendant of one of Noah's three sons, and through them of Noah himself, and through Noah of Adam.

The table of nations' theological function is to establish, in the most concrete and the most comprehensive way available to the ancient narrative, that the entire diversity of the human community is the differentiated expression of a single family rather than the separate existence of multiple independently originating peoples. The theological point is not primarily ethnographic, it is not primarily concerned to establish which specific contemporary peoples descended from which specific son of Noah, but anthropological and theological: the human family is one family, and the diversity of peoples is the diversity of a single family's spreading across the earth in the fulfillment of the cultural mandate's commission to fill the earth. The diversity is beautiful precisely because it is the diversity of the single family's many expressions of the image of God across the full range of the earth's environments and possibilities.

Genesis 11's account of the tower of Babel and the dispersion of the peoples provides the historical account of the mechanism by which the unity of Genesis 10's single family became the diversity of its many peoples: the confusion of languages at Babel produced the linguistic differentiation that drove the geographical separation that produced the cultural diversification that Genesis 10 catalogs. The judgment of Babel is not the condemnation of diversity per se but the divine enforcement of the cultural mandate's unfulfilled commission to fill the earth: a humanity gathered in a single city, united by a single language, seeking to make a name for itself rather than fulfilling the commission to fill the earth, is dispersed by the divine confusion of languages into the diversity of peoples that the commission required. The diversity of the post-Babel world is the consequence of a divine judgment, but the commission it enforces is the commission of the cultural mandate, and the diversity it produces is the diversity that the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 celebrates as the richness of the redeemed community.

B. *Babel, Pentecost, and the New Creation's Resolution of the Diversity*

The theological trajectory from the unity of the pre-Babel human family through the divinely imposed diversity of the post-Babel dispersion to the eschatological unity-in-diversity of the redeemed community in Revelation 7:9–10 is one of the most theologically illuminating arcs in the entire biblical narrative. The pre-Babel unity was the unity of a single language, a unity that was real but that was being exercised in the service of the fallen human creature's self-aggrandizement rather than the glory of the Creator who designed the cultural mandate. The Babel judgment imposed the diversity that the cultural mandate required, and the diversity that resulted was the beautiful, ordered, eschatologically significant diversity of the human family's many expressions of the image of God across the full range of the earth's environments.

Pentecost is the specific New Covenant moment in which the judgment of Babel is addressed, not reversed, but redeemed. The miracle of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11) does not restore the pre-Babel unity of a single

language; it communicates the gospel in the specific languages of all the peoples gathered in Jerusalem, demonstrating that the linguistic diversity of the post-Babel world is not an obstacle to the gospel's proclamation but the specific medium through which the gospel addresses every people in its own language, honoring the diversity that the Babel dispersion produced rather than erasing it. The vision of the new creation in Revelation 7:9–10 is the eschatological Pentecost: not the restoration of a single pre-Babel language but the gathering of persons from every language and every people in the unified worship of the one God, each bringing the specific linguistic and cultural richness of their particular heritage to the common table of the eschatological community. The Babel diversity is not dissolved in the new creation; it is redeemed, gathered up into the unified worship of the God who made the diversity by scattering the peoples, and who will receive the diversity back as the richness of the community He is gathering from all the nations.

The practical implication for the church's mission is both motivating and demanding. The mission to "all the nations" is the mission to every linguistic and cultural expression of the single human family, and the goal of the mission is not the creation of a culturally homogeneous Christian community but the gathering of the full diversity of the human family's linguistic and cultural expressions into the unified worship of the one God. The church that is most faithful to the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 is the church whose community and whose mission most richly embody the gathering of the nations into the worship of the Lamb, the church in which the full diversity of the human family's many expressions of the image of God is present, honored, and offered to the One whose image all of them bear.

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9, NASB 1995

VI. The Eschatological Vision: Every Nation Before the Throne

Revelation 7:9–10 as the Goal of the Human Family's Theological Unity

The eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 is the most powerful and the most theologically comprehensive statement of the human family's theological unity in the biblical canon: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" (NASB 1995) The vision is the eschatological fulfillment of the monogenetic claim: the single human family, now gathered from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues that the Babel dispersion produced, stands before the throne in the unity that the Last Adam's obedience has secured for all who believe. The diversity of the peoples is not erased in the vision; the "every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" is explicitly preserved. But the diversity stands together, before the same throne, before the same Lamb, crying out with the same voice, "Salvation belongs to our God."

The theological movement from Genesis 1–2's creation of the one human pair to Revelation 7:9–10's vision of the uncountable multitude from every nation is the theological arc of the entire human story, and the monogenetic unity of the human race is its connecting thread. The one family created in the image of God at the beginning of the story is the same family, now redeemed, now glorified, now gathered from every corner of the earth to which the cultural mandate's commission and the Babel judgment's dispersion sent them, that stands before the throne at the story's eschatological end. The unity is not the unity of sameness but the unity of the family: the unity of those who share the same origin in Adam and Eve, the same condemnation in the first Adam's transgression, the

same redemption in the Last Adam's obedience, and the same destination before the throne of the God who made them and redeemed them and will dwell with them forever.

The pastoral and missionary implication of this eschatological vision is simultaneously motivating and demanding. Motivating, because the vision establishes that the mission will succeed: the uncountable multitude from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues is not a goal that the church's imperfect and often frustrated mission is unlikely to achieve; it is the certain eschatological fulfillment of the purpose of the One who made from one man every nation of mankind and who has determined that the redeemed community will include representatives from every expression of that single human family. The mission will not fail; the throne will receive the multitude; and the church that labors toward the gathering of the nations into the unified worship of the Lamb is laboring toward a goal whose certainty is established not by the church's own capacity but by the decree of the One who sits on the throne. Demanding, because the vision establishes that the mission's scope is genuinely universal: every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, without exception, without the limitation of the missionary's own cultural comfort zone, without the constraint of the church's own ethnic homogeneity. The vision is the measure of the mission, and the mission is not finished until the vision is fulfilled. "Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19, NASB 1995), and the nations are the same nations that Genesis 10 traces to the three sons of Noah and through them to the single family of Adam.

"And they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

Revelation 7:10, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Monogenesis	The doctrine that all human beings descend from a single pair of first parents, Adam and Eve. Monogenesis is not merely a biological hypothesis about human origins but a theological claim with comprehensive implications for the doctrines of the imago Dei (all human beings bear the image of the same God because they descend from the one pair whom God made in His image), original sin (all human beings bear the guilt and the corruption of Adam's transgression because they are his posterity), the universal offer of the gospel (the gospel addresses the one human family in its Adamic solidarity), and the eschatological vision of the redeemed community (Revelation 7:9–10's multitude from every nation). Monogenesis is established by the creation narrative (Genesis 1:27; 2:7, 21–22; 3:20), the genealogies (Genesis 5; 10–11), the Pauline theology (Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:22), and Acts 17:26.
Polygenism	The theory that the human race descended from multiple first pairs or from a population of founding individuals rather than from two specific ancestors. Historical polygenism was often motivated by racist ideologies seeking to ground racial hierarchy in the separate biological origins of different racial groups. Contemporary polygenism typically emerges from interpretations of population genetics data that appear to require a founding population larger than two. The Reformed and evangelical tradition rejects polygenism on the grounds that it is incompatible with the biblical account's explicit and consistent affirmation of Adam as the single progenitor of the entire human race and with the doctrinal coherence of original sin, the covenant of works, and the federal headship of Adam.
Acts 17:26	Paul's declaration to the Athenian philosophers: "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." The verse is the New Testament's most direct non-soteriological assertion of human monogenesis, establishing in the context of Paul's apologetic address to Greek philosophers that the entire diversity of the world's peoples descends from a single man. Its connection to the universal call to repentance in verse 30 establishes that the monogenetic unity of the human race grounds the universal scope of the gospel offer.
Table of Nations (Genesis 10)	The ancient ethnographic survey of Genesis 10:1–32 that traces the entire diversity of the post-flood world's peoples, languages, and lands to three sons of Noah: Japheth (vv. 2–5), Ham (vv. 6–20), and Shem (vv. 21–31). The seventy peoples listed represent the totality of the human family's post-flood diversity, all traced to the single root of Adam through Noah. The table of nations establishes that the diversity of the human community is the differentiated expression of a single family rather than the separate existence of multiple independently originating peoples, diversity within monogenetic unity.
Babel and Pentecost	The theological trajectory from the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), where God confused the languages and dispersed the single-languaged human community into the diversity of peoples, to Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11), where the Spirit communicated the gospel in the specific languages of all the peoples gathered in

	Jerusalem, addressing the Babel diversity rather than erasing it. The Babel judgment enforced the cultural mandate's unfulfilled commission to fill the earth; Pentecost redeems the resulting diversity by making it the medium through which the gospel reaches every people in its own language. The eschatological resolution (Revelation 7:9–10) is the gathering of the full diversity of peoples into the unified worship of the one God, honoring rather than dissolving the linguistic and cultural richness of the human family.
Ethnic Diversity Within Human Unity	The theological affirmation that the monogenetic unity of the human race (all peoples descend from the same first parents) is compatible with and enriched by the full diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural distinctives that the human family has developed across its history of filling the earth. Ethnic diversity is not a fragmentation of the human family into separate races with different levels of dignity or worth; it is the beautiful variety of a single family's many expressions of the image of God across the full range of the earth's environments and possibilities. The eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 preserves the ethnic diversity ("every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues") within the unified worship of the one God.
Racial Hierarchy	The theological heresy that divides humanity into a hierarchy of races with different levels of worth, dignity, or capacity. Racial hierarchy is comprehensively condemned by the biblical doctrine of monogenesis (all human beings descend from the same first parents) and by the imago Dei (all human beings bear the image of the same God). It is a theological heresy because it contradicts the most basic data of the biblical account of human origins and because it treats as ontological what is at most sociological, the differences between human groups that have developed within the history of the single human family rather than constituting fundamentally different kinds of human beings.
Chavah (חַוָּה)	The Hebrew name Eve, given to the first woman by Adam in Genesis 3:20 with the explanation that "she was the mother of all the living" (em kol-chai, אֵם כָּל־חַיִּי). The name and its explanation constitute the creation narrative's own explicit declaration of Eve's role as the progenitor of the entire human family: all human beings who have ever lived, of every culture and every epoch, are descendants of the woman who received this name. Chavah is derived from chayah (חַיָּה), to live, establishing the connection between the name and the life-giving maternal role it describes.
Mitochondrial Eve / Y-Chromosomal Adam	The scientific concepts derived from population genetics research that identify the most recent common female ancestor of all living human beings (traced through mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited exclusively from mothers) and the most recent common male ancestor (traced through the Y chromosome, which is inherited exclusively from fathers). While the scientific significance of these concepts is debated, their nomenclature reflects the biological datum that the entire present human population traces to a single female ancestor through the maternal line and a single male ancestor through the paternal line, which is broadly consistent with the biblical account of Adam and Eve as the progenitors of the human family, though the scientific and the biblical accounts may differ in their account of the mechanism and the timing.

**Redeemed
Community from
Every Nation**

The eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10: “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” The vision is the eschatological fulfillment of the monogenetic claim: the single human family, now gathered from every expression of the diversity that the Babel dispersion produced, stands before the throne in the unity that the Last Adam’s obedience has secured for all who believe. The vision establishes that the goal of the missionary church’s mission is the gathering of the full diversity of the human family into the unified worship of the one God, and that this goal is certain because it is established by the decree of the One who sits on the throne.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe the monogenesis of the human race with the theological seriousness that the coherence of the doctrines of original sin, the covenant of works, the universal gospel offer, and the eschatological vision of the redeemed community requires. This is not merely a scientific hypothesis about human biological origins; it is a load-bearing theological claim whose rejection would require the reconstruction of the entire doctrinal edifice that stands on it. The interpreter who accepts the polygenist conclusion has not made a scientific adjustment to the biblical account; she has proposed a hermeneutical revision that the theological tradition's most careful interpreters have consistently recognized as incompatible with the coherence of the Reformed doctrine of sin and redemption. The monogenesis is taught by the biblical text, required by the doctrinal tradition, and the Reformed interpreter holds it with the conviction that both sources warrant.

We must also believe the theological implications of human unity with equal seriousness: the equal dignity of every human being, the equal universal scope of the condemnation in Adam and the gospel of the Last Adam, and the equal worth and beauty of every ethnic community's distinctive expression of the human family's image-bearing richness. The church that holds monogenesis with theological seriousness but does not draw out its specific ethical implications, for the dismantling of racial hierarchy, for the full embrace of ethnic diversity within the community of faith, for the urgency of the multiethnic mission, has held the doctrine without exercising its power. The doctrine of the unity of the human race in Adam must produce the practice of the unity of the human family in the Last Adam.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the doctrine of human monogenesis produce in you the specific quality of solidarity with every other human being that the recognition of the shared family produces. The person of a different ethnicity, a different culture, a different language, a different historical experience is not a member of a different kind but a member of the same family: a descendant of the same first parents, a bearer of the same image of the same God, equally implicated in the same Adamic condemnation, and equally the object of the same gospel of the Last Adam. The specific quality of solidarity that this recognition produces is not the abstract philosophical solidarity of a common humanity but the concrete, familial solidarity of those who know they share the same origin, the same condition, the same hope, and the same destiny.

Desire the eschatological community of Revelation 7:9–10 as the vision that shapes the present community's life and mission. The great multitude from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues is the community that the mission is building toward, and the desire for that community, the longing to see the full diversity of the human family gathered in the unified worship of the one God, is the specific motivating desire that drives the missional urgency of those who have seen the eschatological vision clearly. Let the vision of the throne produce the urgency of the mission, and let the urgency of the mission produce the specific cultural, linguistic, and ethnic openness of the community that is being gathered toward the throne.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Read Acts 17:16–34 in full, attending to the specific theological argument Paul constructs for the Athenian philosophers. What is the specific connection Paul draws between the monogenetic unity of the human race (v. 26), the immanence and nearness of the Creator (vv. 27–28), the absurdity of idolatry in the light of the Creator's character (v. 29), and the universal call to repentance in the light of the coming judgment (vv. 30–31)? How does the monogenetic unity of the human race function as the foundation of Paul's entire apologetic argument in this passage? And how would you adapt Paul's argument from Acts 17 for the specific apologetic and evangelistic contexts you inhabit?

- Examine the ethnic composition of the congregation you serve and reflect on the theological implications. Is the congregation's ethnic composition the result of deliberate inclusion or of demographic circumstance? What specific barriers, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, or historical, prevent the congregation from more fully embodying the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10's multiethnic community? Identify one specific, practical initiative that would most effectively move the congregation toward a more intentionally multiethnic community life, and commit to the specific steps required to implement it.
- **Read J. Daniel Hays's *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (2003).** Hays's treatment is the most exegetically careful and the most theologically comprehensive account of the biblical theology of race and ethnicity available in the evangelical tradition. His survey of the Old and New Testament's treatment of ethnicity, from the table of nations through the prophets through the Gospels and the Epistles to Revelation's eschatological vision, provides the biblical-theological foundation that the pastoral and missional engagement with race and ethnicity requires. For the doctrinal dimensions of the monogenesis question, C. John Collins's *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* (2011) provides the most accessible and the most theologically careful evangelical defense of the historical Adam and Eve against the polygenist challenges of the contemporary population genetics discussion.
- Prepare a five-minute presentation suitable for a congregation member who has been told that the concept of "race" as traditionally understood has no biological basis and that the biblical concept of the unity of the human race is compatible with the contemporary scientific consensus on human population genetics. The presentation should explain: (1) why the biblical account's monogenetic claim is a theological rather than merely scientific claim; (2) why the theological claim is compatible with a wide range of scientific accounts of the mechanism and the timing of the human family's origins; and (3) why the theological claim's most important implications, for the equal dignity of all human beings and for the universal scope of the gospel, stand regardless of the resolution of the specific scientific debates.
- Spend time this week reading the table of nations in Genesis 10, slowly, attentively, and meditatively, as a theological exercise rather than a genealogical curiosity. For each of the seventy peoples listed, try to identify the general region and the approximate modern peoples who descend from each line. Then reflect: what does it mean that the entire diversity of the world's peoples, the peoples whose languages you speak and those whose languages you do not, the peoples whose cultures you inhabit and those whose cultures are utterly foreign to you, the peoples whose histories have intersected with yours and those whose histories have been entirely separate, are all traced in this ancient text to the same three sons of the same man? What specific quality of solidarity, of interest, and of compassion does the recognition of this shared origin produce in you toward the specific peoples and cultures that are most foreign and most distant from your own experience?

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, how prominent was the doctrine of human monogenesis in your theological formation? Was it a doctrine you held with explicit theological conviction, or was it more of an implicit assumption that you had not examined carefully? Has the lesson sharpened the doctrine's significance in your theological understanding, and if so, which of its implications, for original sin, for the gospel's universal scope, for racial justice, or for the eschatological vision, has most significantly deepened your appreciation of the doctrine's importance?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Acts 17:16–34 in full. What is the specific theological argument Paul constructs for the Athenian philosophers, and at what specific points does the monogenetic unity of the human race function as a premise in his argument? How does Paul move from the monogenetic unity of verse 26 to the universal call to repentance of verse 30? And what does the connection between the monogenetic unity and the universal call to repentance suggest about the relationship between the doctrine of the unity of the human race and the church's evangelistic mission?
- Read Romans 5:12–21 with specific attention to the phrases that establish the scope of the death that Adam's transgression introduced: "death spread to all men" (v. 12), "the many died" (v. 15), "judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation" (v. 16), "death reigned through the one" (v. 17), "through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men" (v. 18), "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (v. 19). What does the universality of the condemnation require about the scope of Adam's representative headship? And what does the scope of Adam's representative headship require about the biological relationship of all human beings to Adam?
- Read Genesis 10:1–32 as a whole. What is the organizational structure of the table of nations (the three sons of Noah, the seventy peoples), and what theological point does the organizational structure make about the relationship between the diversity of the peoples and the unity of their origin? How does the repeated formula "these are the sons of" maintain the genetic and familial connection between the diverse peoples and their common ancestor? And how does the geographic distribution of the peoples, Japheth to the north and west, Ham to the south, Shem to the east, reflect the fulfillment of the cultural mandate's commission to fill the earth?
- Read Revelation 7:1–10 in its context in the book of Revelation. What is the specific setting in which the vision of the great multitude from every nation appears? What is the relationship between the 144,000 of verses 1–8 and the great multitude of verses 9–10, and what does the combination of the two visions suggest about the comprehensiveness of the eschatological community of the redeemed? And what does the specific description of the multitude, "from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues", contribute to the understanding of the scope of the mission that the church is commissioned to pursue?
- Read Genesis 3:20 and Genesis 11:1–9 together. What does Eve's name and its explanation ("mother of all the living") contribute to the monogenetic claim? And what does the Babel account's description of the pre-Babel human community as "one people, and they all have the same language" (v. 6) suggest about the linguistic and cultural unity of the pre-Babel human family? How does the divine judgment of linguistic confusion relate to the cultural mandate's commission to fill the earth? And how does the judgment's enforcement of the commission relate to the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10's gathering of all peoples before the throne?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that polygenism is incompatible with the biblical account and with the Reformed doctrinal tradition because it undermines the coherence of the doctrine of original sin and the federal headship of

Adam. Some evangelical scholars have proposed forms of “historical Adam” theology that attempt to maintain the theological significance of Adam’s representative role while allowing for a non-monogenetic account of human origins (e.g., Adam as the head of a group of hominids who were “breathed into” at a specific point). Is this kind of mediated account theologically adequate? Does it preserve the theological claims that the monogenetic account is designed to protect? What specific theological considerations would you bring to bear in evaluating it?

- The lesson distinguishes between the theological claim of monogenesis (a historical Adam and Eve are the progenitors of the entire human family) and the scientific questions about the mechanism and the timing of the monogenesis. How confident are you in this distinction? Is it possible to maintain the theological claim while remaining genuinely open on the scientific questions about mechanism and timing? What specific features of the theological claim are most resistant to scientific qualification, and what specific features are most open to scientific specification?
- The lesson connects the monogenetic unity of the human race to the church’s pursuit of multiethnic community as a theological imperative rather than merely a cultural aspiration. Is this connection exegetically and theologically warranted? Does the doctrinal claim that all human beings descend from the same first parents generate a specific obligation for the church’s communal practice, or does the obligation derive from other theological sources (the eschatological vision, the Great Commission, the *imago Dei*)? How do the different theological sources for the multiethnic imperative complement each other?
- The lesson holds that ethnic diversity is not a fragmentation of the human family but the beautiful variety of a single family’s expressions of the image of God. Some theological traditions have interpreted the Babel judgment as the condemnation of the diversity itself, as a punishment that the eschatological community will reverse by restoring the original unity of a single language. Does the lesson’s account of the Babel-Pentecost-Revelation 7 trajectory adequately address this interpretation? What specifically distinguishes the lesson’s account of ethnic diversity as a gift to be celebrated from the account of ethnic diversity as a punishment to be reversed?
- The lesson connects the universal scope of the condemnation in Adam to the universal scope of the gospel offer. Does this connection require that the atonement’s effectual application is also universal (i.e., that all human beings will ultimately be saved)? Or can the universal scope of the gospel offer be maintained alongside a particular account of the atonement’s effectual application? How does the Reformed tradition navigate this tension between the universality of the gospel offer (the gospel genuinely addressed to every member of the human family) and the particularity of the effectual calling (the sovereign application of the gospel’s benefits to those whom God has chosen)?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson establishes that racial hierarchy is a theological heresy that contradicts the monogenetic unity of the human race and the equal image-bearing dignity of every human being. How adequately does the congregation you serve understand and communicate this theological condemnation of racism? Is the theological case against racism, grounded in monogenesis and the *imago Dei* rather than in political ideology, a case that the congregation is equipped to make clearly and confidently? What specific preaching, teaching, or formation would most effectively develop this theological engagement with racism in the congregation?
- The eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 establishes the gathering of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues into the unified worship of the one God as the goal of the mission. How specifically does this eschatological vision shape the missionary priorities and the missionary practices of the congregation you serve? Is the congregation’s mission most heavily focused on the peoples most culturally similar to the congregation’s own demographic, or is it actively engaged with the full diversity of the peoples that the vision encompasses? What specific realignment of the congregation’s missional priorities and practices would most faithfully express the eschatological vision as the measure of the mission?

- The lesson argues that the proper expression of human unity within ethnic diversity is the community in which every ethnic group brings its specific cultural and linguistic and artistic contributions to the common table rather than conforming to the dominant culture's expression of the human image. What specifically would it look like for the congregation you serve to embody this principle, to be a community in which the ethnic distinctives of every member are honored, celebrated, and offered to the common worship rather than assimilated to a cultural standard? What specific practices of worship, fellowship, and communal life would most effectively cultivate this kind of genuinely multiethnic community?
- The table of nations in Genesis 10 traces the entire diversity of the world's peoples to the same single root. How vividly does the congregation you serve experience its connection to the global family of the human race, not merely as an abstract doctrinal affirmation but as a lived relational reality? What specific partnerships with churches and Christian communities in other ethnic, cultural, and linguistic contexts would most effectively make the monogenetic unity of the human family a living reality in the congregation's communal experience? And how would those partnerships most effectively express the congregation's participation in the gathering of all peoples before the throne?
- Unit 8 addresses the unity of the human race and the headship of Adam, a unit that transitions from the Anthropology series' treatment of the human creature's creation, vocation, and communal solidarity to the series' final unit on the doxological conclusion and the transition to Hamartiology. Before entering Lesson 24's treatment of federal headship, reflect on the connection between the monogenetic unity of Lesson 23 and the federal headship of Lesson 24. How does the doctrine that all human beings descend from Adam (Lesson 23) provide the foundation for the doctrine that Adam's representative act determines the covenant standing of all his posterity (Lesson 24)? And how does the connection between the two doctrines illuminate the specific character of the condemnation that all human beings share in Adam and the redemption that all who are in Christ receive from the Last Adam?

Prayer Focus

Open this twenty-third lesson of the Anthropology series, and the first lesson of Unit 8, with a reading of Acts 17:22–34, Paul’s address to the philosophers of Athens. Read it as the most sustained single biblical statement of the theological implications of human monogenesis for the church’s apologetic and evangelistic engagement with the world. Attend to the specific theological moves Paul makes: the acknowledgment of the Athenians’ religious attentiveness (v. 22), the proclamation of the unknown God as the Creator who does not dwell in temples made by human hands and does not need anything from human beings (vv. 24–25), the monogenetic claim that He made from one man every nation of mankind (v. 26), the assertion of the Creator’s nearness to every human being and the quotation of the Greek poets’ own recognition of the human’s divine kinship (vv. 27–29), the condemnation of idolatry in the light of the Creator’s character (v. 29), the universal call to repentance in the light of the coming judgment (v. 30), and the proclamation of the resurrection as the specific event that validates the coming judgment (v. 31). The specific theological logic of the passage, from the Creator’s character through the monogenetic unity of the human race through the universal call to repentance to the proclamation of the resurrection, is the logic of the gospel offered to the entire human family that the cultural mandate’s commission brought into being. Read the passage as the model of the church’s engagement with every culture and every people that the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 commissions it to reach.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the doctrine of human monogenesis to deepen your worship of the Triune God who created the one human family, who redeems the one human family, and who will gather the one human family from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues before His throne. Begin with the Father, who made from one man every nation of mankind, who determined the appointed times and the boundaries of every people’s habitation, who providentially governed the dispersion of the single family from Adam through Noah through Babel to the full diversity of the world’s peoples, and who is even now gathering from that full diversity the great multitude that will stand before His throne. Adore the Father who sees in every member of every ethnic community the descendant of the one man He made in His own image, who sees in the face of the person most different from you the face of your own family member, your own kin, the bearer of the same image and the descendant of the same first parents. Move to the Son, who in the Incarnation took on the specific humanity of the single human race that Adam represents, who became a member of the one human family by being born of a specific woman of a specific ethnic community, in a specific time and place, and who by His representative obedience as the Last Adam secured the redemption of the same one human family that the first Adam’s transgression had brought under condemnation. Adore the Son who said “go and make disciples of all the nations”, who commissioned the church to gather from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues the multitude that the Father has determined will stand before the throne. Conclude with the Spirit, who at Pentecost communicated the gospel in the specific languages of the peoples gathered in Jerusalem, honoring the diversity of the Babel dispersion rather than reversing it, and who is even now at work in every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, gathering the great multitude that Revelation 7:9 sees standing before the throne.

Pray together at the opening of Unit 8 in three specific directions. First, for the theological formation that the doctrine of human monogenesis requires: that the congregation would hold the unity of the human race with the theological seriousness that its comprehensive doctrinal implications, for original sin, for the gospel’s universal scope, for the equal dignity of every ethnic community, for the eschatological vision of the redeemed community’s ethnic richness, demand. Second, for the specific repentance and reform that the doctrine’s racial justice implications require: pray by name for the specific ways in which the congregation’s own communal life, its own missional practice, and its own cultural assumptions most significantly fall short of the theological vision of the equal dignity and the equal welcome of every member of the one human family. Third, for the missional urgency and the missional joy that the eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9–10 produces: pray that the congregation would be gripped by the vision of the great multitude from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne, and that the vision would produce the specific urgency, the specific cultural openness,

and the specific willingness to cross every boundary of comfort and familiarity that the gathering of every nation into the worship of the Lamb requires.

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues ... crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

Revelation 7:9–10, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 1:27–28; 3:20; 5:1–5; 10:1–32; 11:1–9; Acts 17:22–34; Romans 3:23; 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Matthew 28:18–20; Revelation 7:9–10*

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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