Question: In Genesis 10:25, it says the earth was divided. What does that really mean? How was the earth divided? And is this division the origin of the seven continents we know today?

Answer: Let’s carefully examine the passage:

Genesis 10:25:

> “To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan.”

The phrase “the earth was divided” (Hebrew: *”ha’aretz niftachah”* or literally “the land was split”) can be misunderstood if read only from a modern geographical perspective. Theologically, this division is tied to the scattering of humanity after the event at the Tower of Babel, recorded in Genesis 11.

In Genesis 11:1–9, we read how humanity initially spoke one language and dwelt together. They attempted to build a city and a tower to make a name for themselves and prevent being

scattered. But God intervened by confusing their language, causing them to no longer understand each other, which led to their dispersal across the earth:

Genesis 11:8–9 says,

> “So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”

This scattering was a divine judgment against human pride and rebellion (Genesis 11:4) but also part of God’s sovereign plan to fulfill His command to “fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). The “division of the earth” in Peleg’s days refers to this dispersion of people groups, languages, and cultures—not the geological formation of continents.

The division at Babel highlights the consequence of humanity’s attempt to centralize power and autonomy from God (Genesis

11:4). God’s confusion of language enforces dependence on Him and diversifies humanity.

Peleg’s name meaning “division” memorializes this significant moment when human unity in language and place was broken, leading to cultural and ethnic diversity (Genesis 10:5-20 lists the descendants of Joktan and others).

The Bible does not specify the formation of the seven continents here. The “seven continents” concept is a modern geographical classification, not a biblical teaching. The focus in Scripture is on people groups and their dispersal, which fulfills God’s design for humanity to spread across the earth.

The event underscores God’s sovereignty over human history and geography, guiding the fulfillment of His creation mandate.

Genesis 10:25’s “division of the earth” refers to the scattering of humanity into distinct peoples and languages after the Tower of Babel event, not a geological division into continents. This scattering was a key moment in God’s unfolding plan for humanity’s spread across the earth.

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