

THE PROUD ARE BROUGHT LOW Sunday, September 29, 2013

Unifying Topic: GOD SCATTERS THE NATIONS

Lesson Text

I. **The People Build A Tower** (Genesis 11:1-4)

II. **The Lord Scatters The People** (Genesis 11:5-9)

The Main Thought: So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. (Genesis 11:8, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Sometimes leaders make plans that will take those they serve in a harmful direction. What can stop this from happening? In Genesis 11, the participants learn that God is aware of misguided plans and will intervene for the greater good of creation.

Lesson Aim: To acquaint students with the story of the pride of humans in building the Tower of Babel.

Life Aim: To show that God continues to work to restore humans to Him and to one another. This becomes clear through God pouring out His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

11:2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

11:5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

11:6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

11:8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

HISTORY:

Chapter 10 of Genesis: A new part of Genesis starts here. People's lives on the earth were starting again after the flood. The names which follow are generally referred to as the table of Nations—principal races and peoples known to the Israelites. They are arranged in order of seniority and etc. These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, and Japheth, and their sons after the flood.

- The writer begins with Japheth's sons and grandsons. Their names show us that their families moved north, towards Europe. And they moved round the sea called the Mediterranean. Three generations of Japheth's sons are listed.
- Ham's family moved towards the south and into North Africa. Canaan was the original name of the country that became Israel. So Canaan's descendants are important to the history in the Bible. Three generations of Ham's sons are listed. One grandson of Ham, Nimrod, is mentioned as a mighty warrior that established a large kingdom—Babylon. Babylon is in the land of Shinar which comes up in 11:2.
- Shem's family comes last in this chapter. Many of Shem's descendants moved east. But this list also contains the names of places that are elsewhere. Four generations of Shem's sons are listed. His is in the line of the promised Savior.

God had left eight people to begin again. They were left with the task to *"be fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth..."* 9:7. And they most certainly did! They were dispersed throughout the earth.

LESSON:

Genesis 11:1-4 The People Build A Tower

11:1 **And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.** The Bible was not written in chronological order and most probably verse 1-9 had to have occurred before Chapter 10:5; 10:20; 10:32. Whatever language God gave Adam and Eve, it was passed from generation to generation. Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth spoke the same language until the nations were divided in the earth. They spoke the same language and dialect. All the people were bound to speak the same language; that's all they knew. In Hebrew *"one speech"* means one vocabulary, the same meaning for the same things. Their concepts and thoughts were the same; were expressed by the same word.

11:2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. Soon afterwards for some reason they began to travel or migrate in mass. They came from the east as a whole civilization and found a plain in the land of Shinar. Babylon is in the land of Shinar.

11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. At some point, Nimrod and his counselors realized they needed to do something to hold the people and the empire together. They said one to another that their first task was to go and make brick. They did not plan for their structure to be temporary but to be something sturdy. Therefore, they used *"brick"* as their stone; thereby, burning it thoroughly. They used slime for their mortar as the bonding material to hold the bricks together. *"Slime"* a mineral pitch, which, when hardened, forms a strong cement. This was their best option in making the brick.

11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Thus the people were challenged with the vision of building a great city and a great religious center in the form of a gigantic tower to reach heaven.

1. They had a religious purpose for building a city and great tower—to reach heaven by themselves through their own efforts. All human works and efforts to reach God are doomed to failure. This was the beginning of false religion. Babylon was the place where false religion was born upon earth.
2. They had a secular purpose for building a city and great tower—to make them have a great name. Now they were out to gain fame because now they needed to make a name for themselves. Nimrod wanted the people to build a great empire and make Babylon the capital of that empire. This was a tragic mistake. God and ministry were completely left out.
3. They had a worldly purpose for building a city and great tower—to gain security to protect themselves, but without God; for they said *"lest the people be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* They needed to keep everyone together, to grow; not be scattered. The solution to this was to be a unified people.

You can't get to heaven by building a great tower. You can't leave God out in making a name for yourself. You can't think that others would be your security and protection, no matter how unified they may be; man is fickle, God is not!

Genesis 11:5-9 The Lord Scatters The People

11:5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. God saw the secular city and a false religion the people were building and decided to come down to them. God already knew what was happening and so this just reminds me of Him saying to Adam, *"Where art thou Adam?"*¹ Notice the Scripture says that God called them *"children of men."* They were followers of the flesh, and not the spirit. Whatever felt good, they did, following their fleshly lust. This also shows that they didn't need to build a tower to heaven; God is able to come down to them. Do you know the world's tallest man-made structure? It's Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates—829.8 m (2,722 ft) tall.

11:6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. These are the things God saw:

- God saw the unity, the single-minded purpose of the people, they were as one, as one body, set on a single purpose, and that purpose was godless.
- God saw the one language of the people. They were able to communicate and understand one another without any problem. And again their plans and actions were secular and godless.
- God saw that the people had great capability. If they were left on their own; left as one people with one language, they would succeed in building a godless empire and tower of religion.
- God saw pride of their imagination and the evil of their purpose. God knew all about their rebellion and godless purpose. He knew man's imagination.

These are the reasons God intervened in the building of the great religious Tower that He would say within Himself and to Himself that these people are one; have one language, and will let nothing restrain them or their imagination. They were trying to show how great and clever they were. They would be able to do everything that they planned to do, which would only intensify their rebellion. They really thought they were going to reach heaven where God was.

11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. *"...let us go down..."* This is God speaking within Himself and to Himself as the Persons of the Trinity. God is saying enough is enough. We are going to confound (baffle; confuse) their language, so that they can't understand one

¹ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/Genesis/20.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

another, thereby confusing their speech. Why?

- God knew the godless purpose of man, that man was building a city and an empire and a man-made religion that was to be godless, to exclude God entirely—the only true and living God—from the earth.
- God knew man's imaginations; how prideful and egotistical man was, and that man did not want to admit
 - that he needed help.
 - that he could not build the right kind of society and world by himself.
 - that he is sinful and depraved and cannot bring utopia—the glorious empire—to earth through his own efforts.

The point is that when God confused the language of the people, their minds, their world of concepts and thoughts were bound to be affected as well as their languages. There had become a total lack of communication and understanding. The people simply could not understand one another. God took away the power to speak the same language. Probably only each family group understood each other. Just as God dealt with their speech at the Tower, with confusion, He dealt with the disciples speech on the Day of Pentecost to bring understanding where each one's speech could be understood by the other. There is nothing impossible for God! He can do a reversal just like that! Those affiliated with the Tower didn't have God's Spirit; but those on the Day of Pentecost did!

11:8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

God pronounced His verdict. The people had chosen to settle in this land, instead of filling and replenishing the (whole) earth (9:1), so God forced them to scatter. And so work on the tower stopped! The result of this confusion was the scattering of mankind. Just as He had drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, He scattered the people all over the earth because no one could understand the words of the person next to him. Those who spoke the same language banded together and went elsewhere. This lets us know how the families of the earth were separated, everyone according to their own language and what led to the beginning of nations. By confusing their language and scattering them over all the earth, God graciously spared their lives and therefore, gives them opportunity to return to Him. He could have destroyed the builders, their city, and their tower, but He chose to let them live.

11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

The name Babel is linked with the Hebrew verb "*balal*" (to confuse). But the Babylonians called the city "*Babilu*" (Babylon), meaning "*gate of God*." The very name Babel or Babylon means confusion. The name was given to the city and tower because God confused the languages of men there. Instead of making a name for themselves, God gave the project a new name! There is a vast difference in you making a name for yourself or your name great, than when God makes your name great! Who knows the names of those who worked on the Tower of Babel? Yet you know Noah and Abraham because God made their names great! In the church, even in the mega churches, everything is to honor God. God is not the author of confusion, but you will be confused if it's done in your own strength. But in the world, God sometimes uses confusion to humble people and keep them from uniting against His will! TLB 1Cor.1:19 says, "*For God says, I will destroy all human plans of salvation no matter how wise they seem to be, and ignore the best ideas of men, even the most brilliant of them.*"

SUMMARY:

²Everyone on earth spoke the same language. As people migrated from the east, they settled in the land of Shinar. People there sought to make bricks and build a city and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for themselves, so that they would not be scattered over the world. God came down to look at the city and tower, and remarked that as one people with one language, nothing that they sought would be out of their reach. God went down and confounded their speech, so that they could not understand each other, and scattered them over the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city. Thus the city was called Babel.

APPLICATION:

"Human pride will be brought down, and human arrogance will be humbled. Only the LORD will be exalted on that day of judgment" Is.2:11 NLT. *"Men will be humiliated, they will be brought low; the proud will be brought low"* Is.5:15 NB. *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"* James 4:6.

The tower was a great achievement but it was not with God's blessings. It does not pay to provoke God. Have you allowed something big or small to be monumental in your life and take God's place?

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Babel

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>