

Sunday, January 8, 2023 pm

## JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (11)

### The Tower of Babel

Tonight, we continue our journey through the Bible. This is a monthly study introducing the 17 time periods that comprise Bible history. Thus far, we have examined the first 2 time periods – 1) Before the flood (including creation, the fall of man, Adam’s children, and the genealogy from Adam to Noah); 2) The flood (2 lessons addressing events leading up to the flood, the flood itself and changes that occurred after the flood). Tonight, we examine period 3 -The Scattering of Nations.

#### I. Period 3 – The Scattering of Nations

- a. Recorded in Genesis 10-11
- b. Consists of 2 events – the “Table of Nations” and the Tower of Babel and its results.
- c. The time frame would be ~2400-2100 BC. More specifically, many narrow the dating of the flood to ~2350 and the tower of Babel to ~2250 BC (about 100 years later)

#### II. Table of nations

- a. Also referred to as, “The Descendants of Noah”, Genesis 10 records the national descendants of Noah’s 3 sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. While it is another list of names, most of which are only mentioned here, it is important from the standpoint of describing where various nationalities (at the time of Moses’ writings) settled.
- b. Various individuals are mentioned by name and from these names we find basically where the descendants of Noah’s sons and their descendants settled.
  - i. **Japheth** (10:2-5) – had 7 sons and a few of their sons are mentioned. They settled in “the coastland of the Gentiles “according to His language, according to their families, into their nations” (vs. 5). Most believe that His descendants became the early settlers that would become Europe and parts of North-Western Asia. Bob Waldron in his book on this period states that his descendants would include the Italians, Greeks, Spanish, Medes and Persians as well as others.
  - ii. **Ham** (10:6-20) – he had 4 sons (listed) and numerous other descendants from them. Some of the places associated with his descendants according to our text included: Babel, Shinar, Assyria, building Nineveh, Calneh, and Canaan with its many nations. Mentioned in this text include Sidonians, Sodom, Gomorrah, the Jebusites (Jerusalem), etc. Remember Ham was the one cursed by Noah for looking upon his nakedness. They settled in Africa, Canaan and a region around the Persian Gulf. Waldron notes his descendants would include – the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Canaanites, Arabians, Philistines, and early Babylonians. Among his descendants is Nimrod, who is described as “Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD”. He was instrumental in establishing several cities that would become Biblical kingdoms (Nineveh and Babylon, etc.)
  - iii. **Shem** (10:21-31). The descendants of Shem would be the genealogy through which Abram comes. Shem 5 sons are mentioned and their descendants. 10:21 begins, *Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder*. Eber is a reference to the Hebrews – they would become the Jewish nation and Biblical patriarchs. Among the descendants of Shem mentioned is Peleg (10:25) and it notes, “*for in his days the earth was divided.*” This is likely a reference to what we examine in chapter 11 – the tower of Babel.
  - iv. See a map for the division of these lands and nations.

#### III. The Tower of Babel

- a. Recorded in Genesis 11:1-9, we now come to the main event of this 3<sup>rd</sup> Biblical period.

- b. Time frame - likely ~2300-2200. Believed to be about 100 years after the flood. IF, this event was at this time, the population of the earth is estimated by some to be around 30,000 (but we have no real data to verify that, and the tower could have been built as much as 200 years later than that (cf. Genesis 11:17-18 – Peleg lived 430 years) in which case the population could have been much greater. This is significant because of the potential migration that would populate the earth.
- c. The account:
- i. Recall Genesis 9:18-19 where we read from the 3 sons of Noah the whole earth was populated. Gen. 9:1 says, *“So God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”* Genesis 9:7 notes they were commanded to *“be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it.”* It was God’s intention that men replenish the whole earth. But while staying together, they were not doing that.
  - ii. Genesis 11:1-2 notes, *“The whole earth had one language and one speech”*. Vs 2 notes that they *journeyed east and found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt there*. (Shinar would be Mesopotamia, Babylon). The indication is they stayed together.
  - iii. Vs. 3 records, They said to each other that they would make bricks and bake them (stronger and shows again that they had advancements). They also had mortar and asphalt (NKJV) (or pitch – a tarry substance).
  - iv. Vs. 4 they desired to build for themselves a city and make a tower whose top is in the heavens. They desired to *“make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”* Remember what the LORD wanted in Genesis 9!
  - v. Vs. 5-6, the LORD came down to see the city and tower and said, *“Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.”* UNDERSTAND that in their desires: 1) They were repopulating the earth but only a given area, and 2) God was NOWHERE found in their plans. God takes measures to keep the world from totally abandoning Him again.
  - vi. Vs. 7, the LORD continues (NOTE the plural), *“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”*
  - vii. Vs.8 records that the people were scattered abroad over the face of all the earth, and ceased building the city.
  - viii. Vs. 9 records the name of that city, Babel (which means confusion), because that is where the LORD confused their language.
  - ix. From there, *“the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”*
- d. Some lessons to consider:
- i. God means what He says and says what He means. God wanted men to repopulate the whole earth. After all, the earth was created for man (cf. Genesis 1:28. Isaiah 45:18 notes that He formed the earth to be inhabited).
  - ii. When we make plans we must NOT leave God out of those plans.
    1. Psalm 127:1 says, *Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain”*
    2. Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the LORD with all your heart...;
    3. James 4:13-15 – always say, *“IF the Lord wills.”*
  - iii. Furthermore, as we make plans let us not fail to glorify God. Understand that what was happening was a repeat of man forgetting God, as before the flood. 1 Peter 4:11, 1 Corinthians 10:31, do all to the glory of God.
  - iv. Your bad decisions will NOT stop God’s will. Psalm 33:11, *The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.* Proverbs 19:21 says, *There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel—that will stand.* Romans 8:28 notes *And we know that all things work together for good for those called according to His purpose.*

- v. A lesson about unity. Vs. 6 of our text noted that they were united with one language. The LORD noted, “*now nothing that they propose will be withheld from them.*” The people were united, just NOT according to God’s will. We know of many who unite together for evil causes and worldliness, and when they are united, they are stronger and accomplish their purpose – EVEN if it is evil. That is the power of unity. NOW, imagine that unity when it is used for good. We often emphasize the importance of unity – Ephesians 4:1-3, Amos 3:3, etc. It is when we work together, that we can accomplish our goals (e.g. Ephesians 4:16).

#### **IV. From Noah to Abram of genealogies**

- a. Genesis 11:10-26 continues our genealogy. In Genesis 5 we find the Genealogy from Adam (then Seth) to Noah. Here we find the genealogy from Shem (son of Noah) to Abram (Abraham).
- b. This is a continued tracing of the lineage of God’s seed promise (cf. Genesis 3:15). He continues to unfold His plan for man’s redemption.
- c. Again, we have a list of names that are easy to pass over, BUT consider the following about this list:
  - i. While it does not say, “And he died” as Genesis 5 did, it does list HOW long he lived after.
  - ii. But also notice the ages of those mentioned. We know Noah lived about 950 years and died.
    1. Shem lived 600 years (100 before the flood)
    2. Arphaxad lived 438 years and died
    3. Salah lived 433 years
    4. Eber lived 464 years
    5. Peleg lived 239 years
    6. Reu lived 239 years
    7. Serug lived 230 years
    8. Nahor lived 148 years
    9. Terah lived 205 years
    10. Abraham would live 175 years.
  - iii. The point is that lifespans were getting shorter and shorter. We will see that as our timeline develops.

And that brings us to the patriarchal age. In our next lesson, we will be introduced to Abram. But from this lesson let us be reminded that God is in control and our task is to submit to His will. What about you? Are you making plans with or without Him? Think about it!