

Stairway to Heaven

The Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9

Purpose of this Study

- Learning the origins of nations and languages
- Learning more about the patriarchs
- Learning lessons applicable today
- Future studies:
 - How God directed humankind in the Patriarchal dispensation
 - How the Tower of Babel illuminates the Gospel in the Christian dispensation

Genesis 11:1-9

- “Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 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. 3 Then they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. 5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the LORD 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. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 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.”

100 Years After the Flood

- Gen. 9:1 - “So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”
- Gen. 10:32 - “These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.”
- Six generations of people also brought six generations of increasing sin.
- The majority of the descendants of Noah soon forgot about God and His judgment of the earth by the flood.

The Language

- All of the people were in the same place and spoke the same language.
 - Commonly believed the language was a form of proto-Hebrew
 - The language used to name everything before the flood
 - Simple one and two syllable words
 - Language was kept by Eber (Heber) and his descendents
- God commanded man to replenish the earth.
 - Had they dispersed like God had intended, they would have naturally developed different languages.

The Place of the Tower of Babel

- The ark landed on the mountains of Ararat, modern eastern Turkey north of Iraq
 - Gen. 8:4 - “Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.”
- From here Noah and his family moved south and then west
 - Gen. 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.”
- They would be most interested in valleys and plains where crops could easily grow. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are in that area.
 - Gen. 9:20 - “And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.”

The Plans for the Tower of Babel

- The people purposed to do three things that displeased God
 - Build a city (they were told to fill the earth)
 - Build a tower (an ancient pagan ziggurat, a center for idolatry)
 - Build a name for themselves (an expression of human pride and independence from God)

God's Punishment of the People

- It wasn't that God had a problem with their being united, but with their unity for the purposes they had in mind.
 - Gen. 11:6 - “And the LORD 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.”
 - They won't be stopped in any of their plans opposed to the will of God.

God's Punishment of the People

- They were duplicating the pre-deluge conditions!
 - Gen. 6:5 - “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
- God had destroyed the world once for the willfulness and sinfulness of men, and He vowed not to flood the earth again.
 - Gen. 9:15 - “And I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.”
- He needed a different solution for man’s current willful sin

God's Punishment of the People

- God's punishment accomplished His original purposes for the post-deluge world and served the long term good of humankind
 - The language change was a miracle of the mind.
 - The dispersion would naturally result from the multiple languages

Lessons

- Where people gather for their own purposes, the level of sin increases
 - Sin is the constant problem of man.
 - Rom. 3:23 - “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
 - Men must purpose to do God’s will
 - Heb. 13:16 - “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Lessons

- God's will is to be obeyed regardless of circumstances.
 - We don't know why they didn't initially want to separate.
 - Perhaps they loved their families.
 - Perhaps they wanted to be a great people.
 - Perhaps they wanted the easy life.
 - Whatever the reason, God's will was not obeyed.
 - Heb. 5:9 - “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”

Lessons

- Pride will always cause us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.
 - The people together increased a foolhardy kind of confidence
 - They didn't think that there was anything they couldn't or shouldn't do.
 - They wanted to make a name for themselves
- Pride causes us to behave in ways that we normally would not.
 - Rom. 12:3 - "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

Lessons

- God's plans will not be stopped.
 - 1Cor. 1:20-21 - “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Lessons

- No society is so great that it can undo God's will. Where is:
 - The Nation of Babel?
 - Sodom and Gomorrah?
 - Babylon?
 - Persia?
 - Greece?
 - The Roman Empire?
 - The former Soviet Union?

Lessons

- A society that opposes God is society that will not exist for very long
 - Dan. 4:34-35 - “And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, What have You done?”

Lessons

- God's punishments are just.
 - By changing their languages, the people were dispersed; which was what God wanted all along
 - Gen. 18:25 - “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Lessons

- Righteous men can exist in wicked environments
 - Noah, Abraham
- The people of God came from the tower of Babel
 - Eber, from whom the Hebrews descended, lived the longest of anyone born after the flood, perhaps the reward for careful adherence to the will of God.
 - Gen. 11:14-17 - “Salah lived thirty years, and begot Eber. 15 After he begot Eber, Salah lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. 16 Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg. 17 After he begot Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters.”