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The God Who Scatters and Gathers

Genesis 11

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In this final chapter in the primeval part of Genesis we see one final global act of rebellion. After this God will deal with humanity on a nation by nation level until the final day. We see God again exerting His will and that no man or entire race can stand against Him. We see the folly of our rebellion but also how we lie to ourselves that we are mightier than we are.

I. Introduction.

- A. We come to the end of this important section of the bible.
 - 1. After chapter 11 the focus of the rest of the Old Testament will be almost exclusively upon the nation of Israel.
 - 2. But in chapters 9-11 we see how the world got to be the way that it is. How, from a worldwide flood to a plethora of nations and languages, everything came about.
 - 3. We learned that from the three sons of Noah the nations arose. And through the sin of one man, Ham, an entire people group ended up cursed. But also how through one other Man, Jesus Christ, that God is gathering that nations together again.
- B. Today we will see the scattering of the nations, the dispersal of humanity and how God used this time of scattering to prepare for the eventual gathering of people.
- C. My point in this entire series was to challenge you on what you believe about the bible.
 - 1. 20 sermons. Has anything changed in any perceivable manner?
 - 2. Has your convictions strengthened? Or have you found yourself unmoved?
 - 3. What is your final authority in your thinking and living? Is it this culture? Is it the world of modern science? Is it the call of money?

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4. Where did we come from? How did our world get to this place in time? Why do you exist? What is your calling as a human in this world? Why do you oppose or support abortion? What is the purpose and source of government? How do we view the environment? What does God's holiness and judgment look like?
 5. Every one of these found their answer in these 11 chapters. But have you found them? Is your mind held captive by these 11 chapters to define so much of what you experience each day?
- D. Read 11:1-9. The structure of 1-9 is rather simple to see.
1. The key term is "scatter" and is seen in verses 4, 8 and 9.
 2. In verses 1-4 the people refuse to scatter. In verses 5-8 God scatters. In verse 9 is the summary.
 3. Along with this there are three times that the term "come" is used. Twice by the people and once by YHWH. Twice the people make their decision to rebel and resist and then God speaks and acts and every plan of man comes to nothing.
- E. The rest of the chapter is simply the lineage of Shem showing how Abram is from his line hence our focus will be on the first 9 verses.

II. The Refusal to Scatter (1-4).

- A. Verse 1 sets the stage. There is one voice and one language in that day.
1. By this point it is approximately 1,600-2,000 years since Adam and Eve.
 2. People are multiplying and moving outward as space is needed.
 3. And there is a type of unity that we cannot even grasp today. One of a common language. This brings about a concentration of ideas and a unified means to communicate.
 4. But because mankind are born slaves to sin it is not done to the glory of God but for the purposes of man. To be exalted rather than to exalt.
 5. Language is a great unifier. In language comes understanding and communication.
 - a. Thoughts, beliefs, convictions and such are all conveyed quickly if nothing is lost in translation.

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- b. The Greek empire effectively did this resulting in a common language of the masses that set up the coming of Jesus Christ and the gospel message.
- 6. What is worth noting is that there is a concentrated move toward a one world government and part of the process is the breakdown of the language barriers.
 - a. Though many languages exist, we are learning to concentrate the world into lesser and lesser languages. If you know just a few, you can communicate with the majority of people.
 - b. We see more and more people wanting to break down the barriers that nationalism brings about.
 - c. We see the rise of the global economy and shrug at it.
 - d. The internet is radically changing the way we view space, time and people. Through avatars online we create personas that interact with people of all walks and life.
 - e. And all of this is moving toward the promises of Revelation when the world will arrange itself under the rule and authority of the Antichrist.
- B. The first two uses of “Come.”
 - 1. Remember that back in 9:1 God made it plain that His desire for mankind is to grow and spread out. They were to fill the earth.
 - 2. But it is here that we see that though mankind was definitely growing in numbers, there came a time where they made a choice regarding obedience to the Lord’s command to spread and fill the earth.
 - 3. It is important to understand this was not done in ignorance but in rebellion.
 - 4. Vss. 3-4 speak of the first two “comes.” And in these statements we find key desires that drive the story along.
- C. A desire to be centralized.
 - 1. This was done by making a city and then making this tower the focal point of the city.

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2. We know from 10:9ff that Nimrod was the one who established this city. It was his city.
 - a. We also know that he was a mighty man, one who was more than a hunter of animals, but was a conqueror, a hunter of man. This is a man of violence and cunning.
 - b. We also know that Nimrod was of the line of Ham.
 - c. What is interesting is how history and archaeology has shown how the Hamites have been consistently the more technologically developed people. I want to give you a sense of what I mean by this.
 - d. Now remember that the Hamites ultimately settled in the Orient/Far East and in Africa. Their influence is found in those areas as well as in the Middle East.
 - e. What is fascinating is how some of them have ended up in some of the most difficult of living areas and yet not only have they survived, they thrived.
 - f. Examples would be the Eskimos.
 - (1) They developed the Igloo. The dome is one of the most difficult structures to build. Yet they developed a way to do so that was obvious and simple—yet others could not figure it out on their own.
 - (2) They are credited with developing the first tailored clothing and also inventing the thimble. They also invented snow goggles and the kayak.
 - g. The same type of observations can be made of the Indians who lived in the Sonoran Desert here in America. Again they are Hamites and they showed a phenomenal ability not only to survive but to thrive.
 - h. Again you see it with the Bedouin people. Some Archeologists have considered the Nabateans as being some of the most amazing of people. They lived in a very harsh desert environment and yet they flourished in the midst of it. One of their most famous cities is that of Petra.

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- i. These various people groups led the world in understanding and developing medicines and surgery. They were doing things long before the rest of the world even thought them up.
 - (1) One Indian group in Peru used ants to suture wounds.
 - (2) They developed the rubber balls for both recreation and medical purposes.
 - (3) Charles Goodyear spent a long time trying to develop a way to use rubber. The problem was when it would get warm it would break down into a sticky mess. He ultimately found that using Sulfur in a chemical process would stabilize it. However, while he was still trying to figure out how to use this material the Indians had been using it effectively for hundreds of years. They even had developed a way to stabilize it that was quicker and easier than Goodyear's.
 - (4) In fact, with regard to textiles, the Europeans have borrowed almost all that they know from the Hamites.
 - (5) Almost all of the developments on weaving and dyeing and pottery and even printing came from these people groups. All from the people of Ham.
 - (6) The pre-Inca indians were master architects and engineers. They built great monuments of stone in such a way that we still do not know how they did it.
 - (7) The ancient Sumerians were master metal workers. They understood the exact percentages to use when making alloys so as to make the strongest of metals. They had developed mechanical agricultural equipment. They had factories that were highly organized, wage controls, banking systems established, running water, tiled baths, sewage systems, libraries and organized education. They also were masters of mathematics.
- j. My point in all of this is to show you that the Hamites were and are an amazing people group. They have an ability to understand how things work and how to create things that is second to none.

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k. Therefore it is not surprising that we see not only the creation of a great city but also the creation of a great tower by these people. This city was a place where God was not supreme, man was.

3. The famous tower of Babel.

a. It appears that the tower was designed to be a point of reference for the people. It was a tower that was expressly religious. This one was designed to for it to interact with the heavens.

b. The ziggurats/tower is something that is well-known in archeology today. They represent a puzzle to evolutionary studies in that they are usually quite complex and precise, raising the question as to how this could be with less complex societies. In very old societies, dating back to thousands of years before Christ there are many of these structures, some rising up to almost three hundred feet.

c. These structures are fairly common in the world. There is good evidence that the tower/ziggurat was used for religious practices and many false religions can trace themselves back to this specific tower.

(1) One thing that is consistently linked to this city is the study of astrology.

(2) It was here that the zodiac was developed. This later spread into Egypt where it flourished as well. The Chaldeans were the experts in this field, along with the interpretation of visions and dreams (cf. Daniel). The Magi were probably from this area.

(3) Many believe that Babel/Babylon is in fact where all organized false religions really got their start.

(a) In Revelation 17:5 the bible speaks of Babylon as the Mother of Harlots and abominations. This is a reference to false religions. The point is simply this, Babylon was seen as the root and source (mother) of all these religions.

(b) Nimrod himself was deified in Babylon and we know him as Marduk in Jeremiah 50.

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4. The desire for a reputation.
 - a. Here is the core of their heart. And in it is a reputation of rebellion. God had brought a curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham. God had also promised great blessing upon Shem and Japheth.
 - b. But in all of this it is the Hamite, Nimrod who gets all the people together to stand in rebellion to the command of God to spread out.
 - c. He does it in creating the city and with it an alternative religion and worship from that of YHWH.
 - d. They will create for themselves a name, a reputation. They will resist the known command to scatter.
5. So we have a people who quickly forget the flood. They have the whole world to dwell within and no one to conquer. It is empty before them. But they refuse to obey. They seek to know God in a way that is of their own design. And they seek their own fame.

III. The Response by God (5-9).

- A. Verse 6 essentially means this: because they are unified in their language they have begun to establish a way of living and thinking that must be stopped. Unless stopped they will continue in this fashion with no end.
- B. So God shows us again His sovereignty. Let this be seen again. We hear again and again of the free will of man. I have heard people foolishly speak of the fact that though God is sovereign, He cannot overrule the sovereignty of man.
 1. Well here we see God having no problem doing so.
 2. The will of man has been expressed. And God is unimpressed. His will shall be done. You and I can do it the easy way or the hard way, but we cannot thwart the way and plans of God.
 3. Grasp what a massive event this is. God does not care what the will of the people are. He is their Maker and He expects them to obey. And they did, but now in a confusion of languages.
 - a. In His time He acts.
 - b. In His way He acts.
 - c. For His purposes things change.

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- d. And no one has the right to complain.
- C. In vss. 6-7 we see again a hint of the Trinity as God is talking to Himself. This is the Godhead in action.
- D. Notice what verse 7 says. God said that He must come down.
- E. I think this is said on purpose.
 - 1. The tower was one to reach the heavens. This tower was an expression of the greatness of man. This was his crowning achievement.
 - 2. And for God to deal with it required that God stoop down to the level of man.
 - 3. But there was another time in history where God came down. Where He stooped even lower. Where the Son took on the likeness of sinful flesh and became the perfect substitute for us and our sin.
- F. Beloved, God is not impressed by us. We point to our exploits and accomplishments. Men and women today are running around trying to show what they have done. But it all means nothing. We are to be impressed with God in all His fulness and glory.
- G. And note the casualness of the event. Untold number of people all finding themselves unable to communicate with others.
 - 1. Even within evolutionary studies the reality of almost 7,000 distinct languages is something that puzzles them. If the human is at the apex of evolution and it is the most intelligent then why are there so many languages that actually divide and confuse. Evolution does not have a good answer but the bible gives us a very simple explanation, but it requires a supernatural explanation.
 - 2. As this moment occurred the first thing people likely did was gravitate toward others who spoke like them. And then from there they as a group began to move away from the others and the scattering commenced.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. In this final chapter in the primeval part of Genesis we saw one final global act of rebellion. And God deals with them in totality.

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1. After this God will deal with humanity on a nation by nation level until the final day. We see God again exerting His will and that no man or entire race can stand against Him.
 2. We see the folly of our rebellion but also how we lie to ourselves that we are mightier than we are.
 3. Any yet even now some hear this sermon and still think they can stand in His presence on their terms or that they can wish Him away with merely a thought.
 4. But there is coming one more time when the entire world shall be dealt with by God. As the nations gather to destroy our Lord seated in Jerusalem in the coming Kingdom, then God shall act one last time. And the end shall come.
- B. It is worth thinking about how unique Israel is among all of the nations. Everything sprang forth from Noah and family.
1. In rebellion they were spread out. And in the land of Ur was a man, Abram, who was chosen and set apart to become a new nation. And this nation, Israel, continues to this day as an incredible nation with an incredible history.
 2. And one day, it will repent and as a whole this nation will see Jesus Christ for Who He is and believe. All the other nations developed from one another. This is why they all have similarities when you look at them closely.
- C. But also never under-estimate the ability of humans to rebel. You and I, apart from the grace of God in our lives, would abandon all good in a moment. That is what this story teaches us.
1. In just a couple of 100 years after the flood man is fighting God once again. God is rejected and man is exalted.
 2. Praise God that He made the covenant with Noah or surely we would have had another flood.
 3. Man pursues still to this day his name and his glory.
 4. But the people of God are a people called out from among mankind to proclaim the name of the Lord and make known His glory.
 5. Which are you?

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- D. A final thought regarding the idea of the use of the term “come.”
1. Twice there are rebellious decisions by man and for a time they looked like they would work. They speak to one another and call each other to come and do something great in their own eyes.
 2. A building was erected and nothing seemed to happen to anyone.
 3. But if you think about it, this is the same as in the days before the flood. Lives are lived, money is made, fame is pursued and sin is loved. Nothing seems to happen. God does not care, does not see or cannot act. And then the flood.
 4. And now again the people said, “Come” and assumed that nothing was going to happen. But God then acted and no amount of effort by individuals or the whole of humanity could change it.
 5. Today you are here and if you think over the last month or so nothing really has changed in your existence. Your life continues as you expect. There is nothing for you to really fear. You assume tomorrow is yours and even the next.
 6. But there shall be the day when the Lord returns and no person or nation can change it. Shall you repent today? Turn to God through His Son? Or do you wish to gamble yet again for another day?
 7. Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.”
 8. Matt. 11:28, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”
 9. Revelation 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”
- E. The people of the time desired a city and a name that would last forever. But it was without God or to only accept God if He would be in agreement with their goals. And God brushed them aside.
- F. But God has given the name that is above all names to His Son and those who are saved by Jesus Christ will dwell for all eternity as one people in the heavenly city.