

Genesis 11

This is the end of the beginning. Without the first 11 chapters, the rest of scripture can be difficult to understand. In it we have the why things are happening, and where we all came from. In this study so far we have seen the love of God. He demonstrated His love by not destroying Adam and when He didn't wipe out the whole human race with the flood. Even on a cursory level you can see that God is going to do what it takes to bring man to Himself. Even yet, He leaves the choice with us. All He asks of us is to follow the rules,

Deuteronomy 6

5. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Leviticus 19

18. ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself:

This is something we, as people in general, have a very difficult time doing. Tonight as we look at chapter 11 of Genesis, we see another instance of man going his own way and God demonstrating His love by intervening before we get ourselves into trouble again. Solomon wrote in the Proverbs in 2 different places, the exact same verse, chapters 14 and 16

Proverbs 14:12. There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.

We begin with the tower of Babel. From the last chapter we learned that Nimrod established a kingdom of 8 cities. The name Nimrod means "rebel". He was not going to let anyone, especially God, tell him what to do, after all God didn't want people to do what they wanted, which was to sin, and then destroyed the world when they wouldn't obey Him. Nimrod would say "Even though God has said He wouldn't bring a flood again, can He really be trusted?" He went directly against God's promise about not flooding the Earth again in chapter 8

21...Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing **as I have done**.

Which would be by a worldwide flood. I’m sure that after leaving the ark, they all stayed together for protection against the animals and help provide food for their families. Many hands make the load lighter. However, as the clans increased in size, they didn’t spread out into the unknown areas. They traveled about as a group or in larger groups. As parents, when your kids say they want to move far away to another city or state, it’s hard to let them go, even when you know that they are in the hands of God. So their spreading out was minimal.

Nimrod set himself up as a mighty hunter, helping to provide for the people and eventually as a leader. Mighty in this sense means strong and powerful leaning towards being a tyrant. He led people astray by building and living in cities for their own protection. The people started to trust in him rather than the God who saved them from the floodwaters. Josephus wrote,

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. (Josephus)

So even though it is not recorded in Scripture that Nimrod built the tower of Babel, because of his leading during this time and the kingdom he built, the tower is credited to him as having built it.

The Tower of Babel

1. 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.

Journey from the East...

The mountains of Ararat are in the north.

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Shinar is the land of Mesopotamia. The "land between two rivers."

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

The people having lived in the mountains, found that Shinar didn't have the hardwood trees to build with. Palm trees don't necessarily make good building material unless you live in the tropical islands. They learned how to fire bricks rather than using mud bricks as they later used in Egypt or adobe as the native Americans used. Some of the translations call asphalt "slime". As we all know that there is plenty of oil products in this area...asphalt, pitch, bitumen. They used what they had, all under the stern command of Nimrod.

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."

Again, they went against Gods' command to fill the Earth.

Remember Josephus...

...He (Nimrod) also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, (Josephus) A Jewish legend says

"The great success that attended all of Nimrod's undertakings produced a sinister effect. Men no longer trusted in God, but rather in

their own prowess and ability, an attitude to which Nimrod tried to convert the whole world.” (From a Jewish legend)

“Let us build for ourselves...”, a decision made by the leaders, not just one man, although influenced by Nimrod. 2 reasons,...

- 1.) to escape possible flooding
- 2.) to make something that will stand through the ages

1.) to escape possible flooding because they weren't in the mountains any more, and God won't keep His promise 2.) to make something that will stand through the ages as a monument to their greatness, maybe even self-acclaimed deity. If they scattered over the land, the land might consume them and no one will know they even existed and they did this without the help of God...under their own strength. They went directly against the commandment of God. Genesis 9

7. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.”

They had forgotten the stories of their grandparents, Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Stories of Gods' protection before the flood and deliverance through the flood and provision after the flood. We have the same stories written down in Scripture. Often times they can be just stories. But we need to listen to the stories of our parents, and grandparents, of how God was with them and be encouraged. Isaiah wrote in chapter 43... Isaiah 43

- 1. But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And
He who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called *you* by your name;
You *are* Mine.
- 2. When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; And through
the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through

the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

3. For I *am* the LORD your God,...

This means we will have to go through difficulties and the promise of God is that we will make it through.

5. But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built

But the LORD came down...

The word LORD here is Jehovah or YHWH, the proper name of God. This is similar to the phrase "But God..." used 45 times in the Bible. It is used in context with something that people or someone has done and God intervenes to help or save a person or a people. Something He has done or will do. Examples would be... Genesis 48:21

21. Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, **but God** will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Psalm 68:21

But God will wound the head of His enemies,...

And one of my favorites

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This shows that God is very active in our lives even though it doesn't seem like it sometimes. He always wants the best for us in spite of the way we treat Him.

In the text here, God is going to intervene into the affairs of mankind so we don't self destruct...again.

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."

The people were working together as one under one leader. That would be Nimrod. Remember, he pulled the people away from God so that they would depend on him. Nimrod would supply all their needs and in return he expected service bordering on slavery. The people would work for him and be happy because they had their daily needs supplied. Sounds familiar right? The W.E.F. in 2016 saying "you will own nothing and be happy."

Let Us in verse 7 is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...the triune God coming down to keep people from sinning themselves to the point He would have to destroy them again. This is God demonstrating His love for us. His goal is to bring everyone to Himself. Showing the heart of God, Peter wrote in his second letter

2 Peter 3

9. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that ANY should perish but that ALL should come to repentance.

8. So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city

As we learned from chapter 10, from the line of Shem, 26 nations, from the line of Ham, 30 nations, and from Japheth, 14 nations. 70 total. When God scattered the people, He kept the families together in their languages. Even though they couldn't understand, they stayed together because they recognized their cousins. Possibly only 70 different languages total.

The Lord scattered them...shows His longsuffering. He gave them another chance. As they moved away they carried their knowledge of God with them and also the knowledge of the demonic idolatry taught by Nimrod. The 8 people on the ark had some wonderful stories of God and how He provided for and protected them both before and after the flood. In ancient writings around the world there are accounts of a worldwide flood.

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

So basically, as the people may have believed they were obeying God by spreading out over the land by just moving around, they were actually being led away from God by a powerful charismatic leader. They built a mighty edifice, under the direction of Nimrod. The people might say, "We have this mighty tower...see how righteous and holy we are. We are prospering, so God must be blessing us. With Nimrod leading and providing for us, he must be close to God, so everything he says must be right."

Today, we have religion....

Shem's Descendants

After the ark landed the 3 boys had 16 sons that are recorded. Obviously, they had daughters also and more sons that aren't listed. In the rest of this chapter is listed the line of Shem. You can do a simple comparison with chapter 5 and see that the lives of these patriarchs is considerably shorter than their predecessors.

10. This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood. 11. After he begot Arphaxad, Shem lived five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters

Here we see that there were more children than we might think. The same thing is listed back in chapter 5

4. After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.

12. Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot Salah. 13. After he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. 14. Salah lived thirty years, and begot Eber.

Eber is the one whom the Hebrews were named after. He is the grandson of Shem. His sons are Peleg and Joktan. Peleg became the Jewish nation and Joktan became the Arab nation.

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.

Peleg and Nimrod were both in the fifth generation from Noah. Seeing where these 2 men are spiritually could give us some insight into the character of Shem and Ham. The line of Shem is usually considered "Godly" whereas the line of Ham was not. It's impossible to say, Peleg and Nimrod may have been of the same nature. Peleg being restrained by a Godly influence of Shem. He ended up in the pagan city of Ur. This is all speculation, not doctrine. When we look into the life of the kings, we see that the children often take the characteristics of their parents or grandparents. All the research I've done puts the tower built sometime from just after the birth of Peleg up until he was about 30 years old.

18. Peleg lived thirty years, and begot Reu. 19. After he begot Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters

20. Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug.

21. After he begot Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters

22. Serug lived thirty years, and begot Nahor.

23. After he begot Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters

24. Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah.

25. After he begot Terah, Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years, and begot sons and daughters

26. Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Again 3 sons, born in the 70th year of Terah. Similar to the 3 sons of Noah all born in his 500th year. Sounds like they were triplets.

Terah's Descendants

27. This *is* the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.

28. And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans

The word "before" is paw-neem' in the original Hebrew. It can mean in front of or in the presence of. Terah lived in the city of Ur. It is on the southern end of the Euphrates river. It is believed that Terah was so grieved over the death of Haran that he packed up his family and moved from Ur to a place up the Euphrates which is also called Haran.

29. Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

30. But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31. And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

32. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran

When we just read these names and dates interesting things can be overlooked. The first one of these men after the flood to die was Peleg when Abram was 48 years old. Noah died when Abram was 58. Abram could have known the 7 who died before him and all the rest who died after him. Of course that's depending on their language and geographic location. In the next few chapters we will learn of Isaac who was 90 years old when Shem died. These genealogies show the line of Christ back to Adam. But since everything in scripture has a purpose, maybe this will spark an interest and you may want to dig out more information.

So here we have it...the end of chapter 11. We have looked the first 1/3 of human history. We started with the creation of the world, man living in perfect harmony in the glory of God. That not being good enough we wanted more. Even now it seems that we can't be satisfied with what have and want more. We fell to the lies of satan and almost destroyed ourselves. But God had a better plan...