

Dispensation of Human Government - a study for the Bible Institute *at Gulf Coast Baptist Church Spring 2021 by Steve Thomas*

Master - There are no specific distinctions between the Godhead given in this period. In keeping with revelation in the NT about Christ's pre-incarnate ministry we would say that the second person of the Trinity came down to visit the city (Gen 11:7) but that the Godhead acted in unity to confound men's languages ("let us"). The Lord scattered, this could be any one of the Trinity, but since it was the Holy Spirit that had previously strived with man, this may have been a manifestation of His power. God is the master, being the individual giving the instruction.

Steward - Noah and his sons. God gave instruction to them (Gen 8:15-17) and held them and their descendants accountable for immorality (Gen 9:22-25).

Household - all of humanity, the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japheth. The instructions were not given and intended for a small portion of the race, but all people. These individuals formed the household.

Rule of Life / Test - We see God's instruction in Gen 9:1. Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. Also, we see the mandate for capital punishment given: whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. This is the establishment for capital punishment for murder. Gen 9:5-7.
As the human race did the first, spread out and fill the earth, they were to be doing the second.

Two things to notice that have changed here. First, God made provision for the people by changing the eating provision. Up till now, man was given every plant for food. Now, they can eat animals (Gen 9:2-3). Seeing this as a change would lead us to believe that before the flood animals had no fear of humans, allowing Noah to gather any number and type of animal for the ark for preservation. Secondly, we often utilize Uniformitarianism (the present is the key to the past). But God did not institute capital punishment for Cain, it began now. We see in these two issues the mobility of God. His attributes and nature do not change, but the way He deals with His creation does.

We see in the life of Nimrod and the tower of Babel the failure of the household to keep the rule of life in this dispensation. Romans 1:19-26 gives us a clue as to the mentality of individuals at this time. Paul describes those who would worship the creation more than the creator. Paul also tells us that God gave them up to their desires.

Nimrod is described as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." (Gen 10:9) This phrase does not reveal a good thing. Looking at that phrase in 6:11 and 13:13, we see that it could be translated "against the Lord." Commentators agree that Nimrod's ambition, his ruthlessness brought him to power. The object of his hunting is interesting to study. Consider Matthew Henry: ***Nimrod was a great hunter. Hunting then was the method of preventing the hurtful increase of wild beasts. This required great courage and address, and thus gave an opportunity for Nimrod to command others, and gradually attached a number of men to one leader. From such a beginning, it is likely, that Nimrod began to rule, and to force others to submit. He invaded his neighbours' rights and properties, and persecuted innocent men; endeavouring to make all his own by force and violence. He carried on his oppressions and violence in defiance of God himself.*** - Matthew Henry

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Consider what Tim Hoelscher has to say: ***“His name means “we will revolt” or “rebel”. A mighty hunter before the Lord is a strange description of Nimrod, considering his name and city. The description can be interpreted as his presumption in the face of [before] God... It can also be interpreted, “a hunter of the mighty before/against God”. Nimrod the rebel hunted anyone who was before the Lord. He was famous for hunting God’s people. The beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel, a city established for the purpose of revolting against God. That meant that a murderer who should have been put to death was not only allowed to live, but ruled this city and these people.” - Tim Hoelscher***

The extent of Nimrod’s hunting is not agreed upon, but it is clear that the household is not following its mandate.

Mankind had built a tower in their attempt to make a name for themselves. The tower was most likely a ziggurat for the study of and worship of the heavens. The English gives the impression that the attempt was to physically reach heaven. (Gen 11:4) There is agreement that while this tower may have been the tallest structure at the time, the purpose was not physical but spiritual.

Let us build us a city and a tower - On this subject there have been various conjectures. Mr. Hutchinson supposed that the design of the builders was to erect a temple to the host of heaven - the sun, moon, planets, etc.; and, to support this interpretation, he says וראשו בשמים verosho bashshamayim should be translated, not, whose top may reach unto heaven, for there is nothing for may reach in the Hebrew, but its head or summit to the heavens, i.e. to the heavenly bodies: and, to make this interpretation the more probable, he says that previously to this time the descendants of Noah were all agreed in one form of religious worship, (for so he understands ושפה אחת vesaphah achath, and of one lip), i.e. according to him, they had one litany; and as God confounded their litany, they began to disagree in their religious opinions, and branched out into sects and parties, each associating with those of his own sentiment; and thus their tower or temple was left unfinished. - Adam Clarke

The tower of Babel was an attempt at a one world religion, worshiping the creation not the creator. It is an attempt at unity and cohesion, lest they be scattered as they were instructed.

God brought judgement upon the household by a three-fold division. We see the division of language, race, and continents. Gen 10:32, 11:9, and 10:25 guides us to these conclusions. Given by way of introduction in 10:5.

A lesson to be learned here for the grace believer is that God established human government. Romans 13:1-4 gives us a clear response to both moral and immoral government. The church is a body of believers which God has called out from the World for His name Acts 15:14). Many times throughout history, the church has attempted to involve itself in the affairs of the world system. The realm of government has provided this distraction. Government, even when immoral, remains in place for a purpose. Many times believers fail to grasp that purpose and believers move against that government. That resistance will not bring about true righteousness. We are to ***“adorn the gospel with faith and patience.” - Miller’s Church History***