

Genesis 11:1-9

Tomorrow's headlines written yesterday!

On October 13, 1789, John Adams, one of our founding fathers, stated, “our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Yet today, many would have us think politics and faith make strange bed-fellows. Many would re-write our history to edit out God and the faith of our fathers. What happens to a culture when such occurs? Ultimately, nothing short of judgment is what occurs. This is clearly seen as we continue our study in Genesis

Notice first of all the primitive practice seen in verses 1-4. Here we see people seeking to live life on their own apart from God. Here we also see a portrait of 20th century man. Notice first *their moving* (vv. 1-2). God clearly said after the flood to “increase in number and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). But notice as they moved that they settled together. They began to build cities. Most of God’s servants throughout Scripture were content to dwell in tents (cf., Abraham, Shem, Noah, etc. - none of them built cities). But here we have rebellion against God’s plan to spread out in the earth.

It’s interesting that the first builder of cities in the old world was Cain (Genesis 4:17) who was of an ungodly line. And the first builder of cities in the new world is Nimrod (Genesis 10:9-11), again of the ungodly Hamite line! In both cases we find an attachment to this world. But for children of God, this world is not our home. 1 Peter 1:1 describes us as “strangers in the world.” We are only passing through on our way to a better place. Centuries ago, the pilgrims were happy to leave their homeland and come to America. They did so solely so they could worship God. They had no attachment to the things of this world. They were looking for a better world, and it wasn’t necessarily America - rather, it was their eternal heavenly home! The primitive practice of these folks in our passage, however, is the present practice of so many. Taking their eyes off God, they focus on the temporal, neglecting the eternal truth of God. Has America found a plain in Shinar? Have you individually? Or, will you follow God wherever?

Notice next *their materials* (v. 3). This verse contains the first of three “let us” statements. It really illustrates their contempt for God. There was no dependence on Him; rather they were totally self-sufficient. “Let us make bricks” they said. It was fitting for them to build with bricks. Brick is simply hardened clay and clay is the substance from which man is made. Here is mute evidence that their efforts were nothing short of humanistic. But all human efforts are bound to be faulty and frail.

What a contrast these folks our to the founding fathers of our nation. They never saw their efforts as “theirs.” Instead, they saw their actions as an extension of what God was doing! I’m afraid, however, our modern culture is much more akin to this ancient one.

It was also fitting to have “slime” for mortar. Our efforts may appear grand to others, but in God’s eyes they’re slime. Isaiah 64:6 says, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.” Friends, the material of self-effort will never make you right with God!

Notice too *their mischief* (v. 4a). Here is another “let us” statement. Let us build us a city and a tower whose top reaches heaven! Some think this was intended to secure protection

from another flood. Chronologically, this was just over one hundred years from the Flood. Certainly it was still fresh on their mind! If this is the case, isn't it interesting that they had so quickly began distrusting God. God had said He'd never flood the earth again; yet they built the tower anyway.

Others claim that the tower simply shows their independence from God. The idea is more of "a tower and its top with the heavens." In other words, the idea was not to build a tower so tall that it reached heaven, but to have a tower from which to plan by the zodiac; i.e., astrology. Thus, God wasn't even in their thoughts! Whatever the reasoning behind it, it was wrong.

And so was *their motive* (v. 4b). The whole idea was to glorify humanity and bind themselves together in defiance of God. They wanted to make a name for themselves. This is nothing short of pride. There are many today who live to make a name for themselves by their accomplishments. But let me ask you, who were these people? What was their name? History doesn't record any of the names. Some think Nimrod, but the Scripture doesn't say for sure. They wanted to make a name for themselves - BUT THEY DIDN'T. They wanted to prevent their dispersion. As noted, God had said, spread out and replenish the earth. But they said, "no God, we'll live together and die together." They wanted to prevent their dispersion - BUT THEY DIDN'T.

I have to ask you: are you moving through this life, or have you settled down content, apart from God? What materials are you building your life with? Temporal pleasures or eternal truths of God? Does your life betray mischief? An intellectual knowledge of God but a practical denial? What is the motive for what you do? Anything short of glorifying God is sin!

Yet in all this, God was not inactive. Notice then, the preventative passion in verses 5-9. Here we see God at work in the affairs of man. As Ben Franklin said years ago, "the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men."

Note first *God's cognizance* (v. 5). This is an interesting verse. It almost sounds like God was caught off guard! But in reality He knew all along. And now He would come and act in judgment!

The people are here called "children of men." Literally the Hebrew says sons of Adam. This refers here to the disobedient, sinful Adam. Scripture says we're all sons of that first Adam in that all have sinned. Several years ago a minister announced that he had discovered from his study that there exists 726 sins. He was shortly inundated with requests for the list. It seems that some felt that perhaps they had missed some of the sins!

Many today speak of compulsions, neurosis, or addictions. You can re-define it, re-name it, whatever. But God still calls sin, sin. He was cognizant of the sin of these folks, and He's cognizant of ours. The real question is, will we be cognizant of our sin and admit it?

Such cognizance led to *God's concern* (vv. 6-7). God knew that left unchecked, this sin would again create worldwide problems. These folks would strengthen one another and wreak havoc on the remnant of the godly. So he dealt with three things in His concern.

First, He dealt with their *oneness* (v. 6a). How paradoxical it is - these builders, although from different families and having different interests, were one in opposition to God. What a shame that today, so often we, who are one in Christ, are divided! You might think oneness is a good thing - but NOT when it's a oneness in opposition to God

Next, He dealt with their *obstinacy* (v. 6b). The scripture says, "nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them." That's what sin does. Once an area of sin "appears" to be

fruitful, you've stepped onto a slippery slope, and you'll soon be dabbling in all sorts of iniquity!

Notice also how he dealt with their **openness** (v. 7). No more would language be open. From henceforth it would be confounded. This was more than just an inconvenience; this was a great judgment. Now they were deprived of the knowledge of the ancient tongue! Hence, they were incapable of communicating with true believers. Don't ever forget how blessed you are to have the true gospel in your tongue. I can't begin to imagine living in part of world where the gospel has never been translated. Praise God we don't. But that also means we have no excuse!

So finally, to prevent further difficulty, notice **God's casting and confusing** (vv. 8-9). Because of His concern, God cast the people out and confused their language. They had ruled God out of their thinking and thought they rid themselves of Him. But God has never permitted society to function independent from Him. Even at the end of time, He won't permit it!

That brings us finally to a prophetic picture. These words were written yesterday, but they're truly tomorrow's headlines. What do I mean? I believe these ancient words of Genesis 11 present a prophetic picture of the end times!

In Genesis 11 we see a cultural unity; they thought alike and spoke alike. We also see a political unity, which was symbolized by the building of the city together. There is also a religious unity, seen in the tower whose top reached unto heaven. We see a similar startling picture in Revelation chapters 17-18. Notice some excerpts from this passage:

Revelation 17:1-5, 9-13

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES, AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH . . . This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast."

Clearly we see the end times, pictured here, being characterized by cultural, political and religious unity. Today's headlines show us swiftly moving in that very direction. Just as there was a great rebel standing behind the first Babel, so there will be behind the second; Satan! But just as God descended in judgment upon the first Babel, so He will upon the second: *"After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the*

maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries" (Revelation 18:1-3).

In Genesis 11 man attempted to build a society apart from God. Today we are doing no less! I believe our culture's efforts will culminate in the coming of the lawless one; the antichrist whose power is derived from Satan himself! But just as God judged Babel, he will judge the coming Babylon. He will judge all who follow her ways.

In 1781, Thomas Jefferson said, "can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever." Twentieth century Americans have missed what Jefferson so clearly recognized so long ago! Just as God judged Babel, just as He'll judge Babylon at the end, He'll judge all who rebel against Him. But there's good news! There's hope. Christ died to redeem us from our rebellion! By trusting Him there's hope in the midst of a very confused world. Will you trust Him?

Parlez vous francais? ¿hablas espanol? Sprechen Sie Deutsch? Hellenisti ginoskeis? The sounds are all different, but they're all asking same question. Parlez vous francais? is the Frenchman's way of asking "do you speak French?" ¿hablas espanol? is the Spaniard's way of asking "do you speak Spanish?" A German might ask, Sprechen Sie Deutsch? to determine if you speak German. And those who spoke Greek in the first century might be heard asking Hellenisti ginoskeis? to determine if somebody could speak that language.

It's important to be able to communicate. It was man's sin that cut that ability to communicate off. But it's even more important to communicate with God. Again, sin has corrupted that ability completely. But 2000 years ago, God opened those lines of communication again. He sent His only Son to be the sacrifice for sin. Any who repent and turn to Him have an open line. No matter the language, the solution is the same: To Spaniards, it's Jesus Christo. The solution for Germans is Jesus Christus der Sohn. For Greeks, that solution is Iesous Christos. We know him as Jesus Christ. Even the very name sounds the same, no matter the language! Jesus is the solution for sin!