

Genesis 10-11

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By Bob Mendelsohn

Noah (Part 5 of 5)

“Hunters and Towers”

For those who are with us for the first time today, we have been studying the book of Genesis. Each week we take a section or sections of the book and see if it has anything to say to us, as 21st century people. [for those online the text of the Bible as well as some extra notes are available at the end of the actual sermon]

I've never been much of an outdoorsman. Maybe I've held a fishing pole twice in my life, and once it was in a store considering becoming an outdoorsman. I've never held a gun. Not a rifle nor a handgun, even though I'm an American. I play sports outside, and rather enjoy tennis and golf, but the typical Aussie rugged croc handling bushie, nope, that's not me. So today's story will be very much outside my paradigm as we will look at the construction of the first megatower, called the Tower of Babel and we will see Babel's first mayor, Nimrod the Mighty Hunter. We will comment about statism and rebellion, building contracts and wars. Sounds like the front page of the Herald, doesn't it? So using the outline of Noah, Nimrod and Babel, we will study today's text.

We've been studying the pre-Abrahamic period from the biblical account. Since all the earth and its inhabitants should be able to retrace its roots to this event, what we see in ancient accounts and in tribal conversation suitably helps to support the biblical text. Here are some reports from the globe:

The Hopi tribes of Arizona as well as the Egyptians in Africa remember how man once lived together in peace. The Bataks on Sumatra tell how man and gods once could meet each other on a mountain. Peace was disturbed when man paid attention to other gods. The Chin

people in Asia know how they once lived in one village and with one speech. On Samoa people lived together in peace in and around a tree. The branches of this tree are growing to the extreme north and the extreme south.

Walam Olum is the holy book of the Delaware tribe of Indians in the eastern US. In this book they tell about a creation, the coming of a snake and about the flood. After the flood, so they say, man lived close together and things were going well. A time of divorce and leaving came when weather conditions changed dramatically.

The Lozi and the Mkulwe tribes in South Eastern Africa both know about climbing to heaven by piling up trees. The first tried to reach heaven, the second the moon. But in both cases the people failed in their attempt and the structure collapsed.

The Lolo tribe from Western China remembered a tower was built for fear of a new flood. The Chin people in South East Asia know how once all man lived in one village and spoke one language. Then they tried to reach the moon by building a wooden structure. The building became so high and had so many floors, builders became isolated from each other. This caused the development of new languages. But the moon-spirit became angry and sent down a huge storm. The building collapsed and man were scattered.

The Miao tribes of southwestern China know about building a big city with a high tower. But God struck at them and changed their language and accent. In despair mankind separated under all heaven, encircling the globe. (Which is a very important note, because when the Miao were discovered, they didn't know anything about a round world!)

On Tahiti is told of a man and a woman who survived a big flood. They found safety on a mountain. But as soon as the water was gone, a big storm terrorized earth. It started raining stones and trees! No building in this story. No confusion of tongues. Just two people who survived the flood and became the elders of all human beings. But note the strange kind of storm soon after the flood!

The Guarani tribe in Paraguay remembered how they once lived in a mysterious land at the other side of the sea. Two brothers - the ancestors of the Guarani - took their people to their new country. In Brasilia we find the Caraja and Javaeh tribes. These men survived a flood but soon afterwards fell into big trouble. There was not enough drinking-water. So they decided to scatter and each group took his own language. Could the name Javaeh be a derivation from Japheth, the son of Noah?

The Tinglits of Alaska tell how they once survived a worldwide deluge in a big floating ark. When the water sank the ark grounded on a mountain and broke in two pieces. And this, the Tinglits say, is the cause of the diversity of languages.

All these global facts are designed to help us understand that there is one truth, there is one story, and it's the story of God and what He wants to do with humanity. That story is dependable in the Scriptures, and we have God's plan unveiled to help us avoid the pitfalls so very evident in the first 9 chapters so far.

Today's lesson is found in chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Genesis. Let's read selections.

First the drunken scene of Noah

Noah finds the new agriculture confusing and as a result of losing the greenhouse effect around his city and village, he experiences drunkenness for the first time. Ouch, what a hangover he has. And while he is in a drunken state, perhaps still in the marriage bed of his wife, hoping to have another child, his grandson, the small or younger son of Canaan, enters and goes out laughing. He mocks his grandfather and invites his uncles and others to come see the spectacle. It's Big Brother in Turkey, the uncut version. Some say Canaan castrated his grandfather and left him to shamefully lie.

So the uncles, Shem, the progenitor of the Shemites, later Semites, and Japheth, walk in backwards (repeated twice) to fix the shocking sight, to cover up their dad from future embarrassment, and to get on with things.

The results are fixed for eternity. Shem and Japheth continue in the blessedness of the postdeluvian era, and Canaan, father of the Canaanites of later story, will be cursed then and still to this day. One shameful act really does effect a long story, doesn't it? Consider the woman in Colorado who a fortnight ago was discovered to have started a bushfire to spite the agency she was working for, which was the Forest Rangers Fire Protection Group, that is, the fire brigade of Colorado. Wow! Or what about a 17 year old sign bearer at State of Origin 3 brandishing a placard about Gordon Tallis' mother, and as a result all the rest of the week, the radio talkback shows have featured Tallis' reactions both verbal and with finger extended, and a wave of protest continues. One assassin shot an Austrian ruler in 1914 and both world wars really started from that. Canaan had a chance to end embarrassment and instead ushered in a curse on his family and evil again found its way into the freshly washed world.

By the way the sons of Shem became the hosts of the Japhethites throughout the Middle East and China, and Japheth continues to be growing in Europe and the US and the Commonwealth. Canaan has been a servant people for centuries. Ham is not mentioned in this prophecy. Only his children and generations to follow, which by the way include the Philistines, from whom the Palestinians derive their name.

Secondly today we study Nimrod

The name Nimrod may come from the Hebrew verb 'nimrodh' which is translated, "Let us revolt." (We will revolt," points to some violent resistance to God. (Kiel and Delitzsch, 1888) The English word 'maraud' has a similar root. Nimrod is referred to as a 'mighty one': this phrase derives from the Hebrew word 'gibor' which can mean "tyrant". Nimrod was not just a powerful man on the earth at that time, he was a tyrannical leader of men. The phrase "a mighty hunter

before the Lord" suggests that it was not wild beasts that Nimrod was hunting, but men. Having hunted them he would enslave them and have a tyrannical hold over them. And all this was done in direct opposition to the Lord.

Under him, society passed from the patriarchal condition. In this, each separate clan or tribe owns the sway of its natural head. But with the change, different clans or tribes recognize the sway of one who is not their natural head, but has acquired his ascendancy and dominion by conquest.

It has also been suggested that Nimrod tamed a leopard to accompany him on his hunts for animals, just as people today use dogs for this purpose. This could also be where Nimrod got his name: the Babylonian name for "leopard" was "nimr" and "rod" means "to subdue." Franz Delitzsch (1888) confirms our view of Nimrod as the first political leader (of the post-Flood world) What the narrative has in view is not the greatness of Nimrod as a hunter, but his importance as the founder of a state. The hunter without equal was also the first monarch. Three times in Genesis 10 and again in 1 Chronicles 1:10 the word "mighty" is applied to Nimrod. The Hebrew word is "gibor," and is translated in the Old Testament "chief" and "chieftain." The verse in Chronicles is in perfect agreement with these in Genesis—"And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be mighty upon the earth." The Chaldee paraphrase of this verse says, "Cush begat Nimrod who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against Jehovah." Observe, "a mighty hunter *before the Lord*." If we compare this expression with a similar one in Genesis 6:11—"The earth also (in the days of Noah) was corrupt *before God*," the impression conveyed is that this "Rebel" pursued his own impious and ambitious designs in brazen and open defiance of the Almighty. As we shall see, the contents of Genesis eleven confirm this interpretation.

"God intervenes, bringing Nimrod's schemes to naught by confounding the speech of his subjects and scattering them throughout the earth. Here was one of the mightiest and most far-

reaching miracles of history. It finds no parallel until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when another miracle of "tongues" was performed. Therefore is the name of it called Babel (Confusion); because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:6-9). From AW Pink on Genesis.

Third today we read about the Tower of Babel

This is one of the most famous biblical towers, one of the most famous anywhere towers ever built. Perhaps before September 11, the most famous anywhere. By the way, it should be noted how many popular theologians have compared the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, in NYC, to the Babel tower we view today. Some rabbis count this time as 1996, that is, almost 2000 years since Creation, and 340 years after the flood. [340 is the numerical equivalent of Shem]

Babel is usually rendered Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar's time which is about 500 BC. It was one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. Jeremiah 51.13 later describes the city which lies on the east bank of the Euphrates river as being upon 'many waters, abundant in treasures.' We read in Daniel 4.27 "Is this not the great Babylon that I built by the might of my power as a royal residence and for the honor of my majesty?" So Babel is from earliest time a name for self-made wealth and human treasure.

In the language of that time Babel meant "the gate of God" but afterwards, because of the judgments which God inflicted there, it came to mean "Confusion," and from here onwards this is its force or meaning. By coupling together the various hints which the Holy Spirit has here given us we learn that Nimrod organized not only an imperial government over which he presided as king, but that he instituted a new and idolatrous worship.

lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). Here we discover a most blatant defiance of God, a deliberate refusal to obey His command given through Noah. He had said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1); but they said, "Let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

The ziggurat form like I'm showing on these pages of a temple in those days was standard. And it would have been buildable to huge heights, almost as we read 'to reach the heavens.'

There are 70 nations each with separate languages in the world. That is the counting from 2000 years ago by the rabbis. Of course, we know there are over 200 nations of the world, and that there are thousands of dialects, but back then, the world was divided into 70 nations. (15 from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 25 from Shem). The list is available if you email me. Interestingly, if a lister includes Nimrod, they omit Philistines. If they include Philistines, they omit Nimrod. Same troubles, then as now, eh?

Listen to what they said, "Come let us go up" and do wrong. Gathering together is innocuous. What we do when we come together, that will define whether or not it is a ministry context or a human one. Noah would have been alive in those days, and perhaps he saw and preached as he did in the beginning. But we don't know that. Abraham also was alive, nearly 30 or 40 by then. One wonders if they knew and could preach and stop what happened.

The very thing that should have stopped them, naming themselves, was what drove them. They longed for a name, a ministry, a recognition. Brother and sisters, don't long for such things. It's a trap. Eve fell into it; she wanted God's glory and name. God will not share His fame with another

"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.) Is. 42:8

We should mention Pentecost here. People from the entire known globe at Jerusalem gathered in 30 AD, about 1900 years ago. Jesus had just died and risen from the dead. 120 of his

followers were waiting in Jerusalem for whatever He had promised, and He had instructed them to wait. No books, no videotapes on the Holy Spirit; just they and their ponderings.

Then it happened, the sound like a mighty rushing wind came and those 120 were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They went downstairs and began to speak in other languages and preach to the foreign tourists who were in Jerusalem for Sh'vuot, the Jewish holiday of Pentecost that year. They all heard them in the same language, that is, something translated the languages into the languages of the hearers, or perhaps the speakers were speaking in exactly the language and dialects of the hearers. Either way, it was a miracle. And in direct contrast to the Babel sounds, although there were probably 70 languages here being spoken, they all were united in purpose and united in result. About 3000 Jews gave their lives to Y'shua that day, were born again and baptized. Languages can bespeak the glory of God or the shame of men. It's what is in the heart that comes out the mouth, Y'shua said.

At Babel, all nations gathered to prevent dispersion, and ended in shame and dispersion without glory. All nations gathered in the name of Y'shua for His glory brought the miracle of tongues and the dispersion into all the world, evidenced in our being gathered even here this morning. God's blessings should go to the ends of the earth. The miracle at Pentecost is the way for that to happen.

One final comment about our language. God blessed Noah at the beginning of chapter 9. At the end of chapter 9, God sent a curse on Noah's grandson Canaan. Why? Which one wins? The last statement overrides all previous statements in God's economy. Hence the curse triumphs over the blessing, which is not a condition for which you should long. But wait, you say, the curse came from Noah, and not from God! And you are right to notice this, but unfortunately, God has given us the power to curse and the power to bless. That's what the Proverbs mean when it says, "Prov. 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit." You will live in direct proportion to what you say. Your friends and colleagues will as well. Be a blessing; be a life giver; be

far from death in all you can do and say. Let others experience blessings from you, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Better blessings than the curse of Babel, amen?

Some final thoughts

What would I get if you asked me, what is the point of today's sermon? I would list the following:

- 1) Bless those who curse you, and be a blessing dispenser
- 2) He who covers sins in others is wise, and he who lives to expose them in others will be shamed
- 3) Fighting against God is not a wise strategy
- 4) When you do fight God because you want something different than He wants, you eventually will lose anyway.
- 5) Be filled with the Spirit and work with others to bring God's blessings to the world.

Brothers and sisters, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His covenant. His teaching is great, but it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God and give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into communion with Him, then why not pray this prayer and