

## Week 4. The Tower of Babel and Abraham. Class Notes

### [A] THE CITY AND TOWER OF BABEL (11:1-9)

#### 1. The Problem of the Human Heart

The fall of the righteous Noah into drunkenness (9:18ff). Also in the lives of the succeeding generations, including at Babel.

#### 2. The Biblical Context of the Tower of Babel Event

Ch 10 begins a new *toledoth* section of Genesis – see last week’s notes. Focus on the nations - all descended from Noah. 10:32 as a concluding summary. 11:1-9 does not follow on chronologically from end of chapter 10. It takes us back into the early history of chapter 10 to highlight how the spreading out of the nations came about - by the intervention of God. Babel - a Hebrew word elsewhere translated as ‘Babylon’ (see 10:10).

#### 3. [Babel=]Babylon and Jerusalem – City of Man and City of God

Babylon capital city of Babylonian Empire that (6<sup>th</sup> C BC) defeated Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, temple, etc. Babylon became symbol for human society in rebellion against God. See Revelation: Babylon the Great (Rev 17-18) and new Jerusalem (Rev 21-22); personified as two women: Babylon ‘great prostitute’ (Rev 17:1, 5); new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2) bride of Christ. Bride of Christ has a glorious end; counterfeit bride/ prostitute suffers everlasting ruin. [See also Rev 19:3 and Rev 21:11]. Jerusalem - ‘City of God’ [See Psalms 46:4; 48:1, 8; 87:3; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12]. Babylon - ‘City of Man’.

#### 4. The ‘City of Man’ in Genesis 10-11

(a) **Connection with Nimrod.** 10:8-10. His name – Hebrew for ‘let us rebel/ revolt’;

(b) **Evidence of 11:4.**

(c) **Evidence of Tower Building.** Tower for security and protection. Contrast the Psalmist (Ps 61:3) and Prov 18:10. Tower – a ziggurat/ temple-tower. See Judges 9:46-52. Akkadian for Babylon, *Bab ili* = Babel here - means ‘gate of god’. At Babel people [a] creating own worship system, so Tower represents all counterfeit religious systems or, [b] seeking to set themselves up as divine beings themselves. See Isaiah 14:13-14. Pride and arrogance. Contemporary parallels. Contrast the True Man, Jesus (Phil 2)

5. **God’s Judgement.** City-building stopped; (v 7) ‘confused their language so that they would not understand (literally, ‘hear’) one another. Scattered them – original intention (see 1:28; 9:1 – ‘fill the earth’!).

#### 6. No Mitigation of Grace? No Godly Remnant?

Contrast 1:9 with 4:26, 6:8, chs 8-9. 11:10-26 - line of Shem - Abram (11:26)

## [B] GOD'S NEW BEGINNING THROUGH ABRAM

1. **Abram's Idolatrous Upbringing.** Joshua 24:2. Genesis 11. Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans – c 150 miles SE of Babylon (modern Iraq). Family names indicate moon worship. Temples to moon god at Ur and Haran.

2. **The Sovereign, Electing Grace and Love of God in Abram's Experience.** Gen 18:19. Acts 7:2 'God of glory ...' led him to a pilgrim life = discipleship

3. **A Pilgrimage from the City of Man to the City of God.** Hebrews 11:10 - allusion to Genesis 11? Abraham left Ur and Haran ('City of Man') and journeyed to the promised land where he worshipped God at various altars (12:7, 8; 13:18; also 13:4. Final one at Mt Moriah (22:9) = Jerusalem and temple site (2 Chronicles 3:1) - 'gate of God' – holy place

4. **For us too**

City of God no longer has a physical locus as it did in OT times. Primarily spiritual. Heb 12:22ff. Already true of every Christian. One day true of our spirits made perfect. Consummation - Day of the Resurrection. City of God will come down from heaven to earth (Rev 21:3-4).

## [C] THE PROMISES OF GOD TO ABRAHAM

(a) **'I will make you into a great nation** – by end Exodus 1 re population. For us - **Isaiah 60:22**

(b) **'I will make your name great'**. **Contrast 11:4.** 'Great name' usually refers to God (see Josh 7:9; 1 Sam 12:22; 2 Sam 7:26; 1 Kgs 8:42; Pss 76:1; 99:3; Mal 1:11; etc). One other exception - King David (2 Sam 7:9 and parallel in 1 Chron 17:8). Abraham – royal? Name = character of God? See Rev 22:3f

(c) **'I will bless ... (v 2) you.'** To reach all the nations and peoples who had experienced his judgement at Babel. Reflects first words to humanity (Gen 1:28). It's the way the heart of God is wired. Material blessings; esp blessings of salvation (Eph 1:3); blessing of the Spirit Gal 3:14). Blessing received by the nations on day of Pentecost (Acts 2). They heard - the judgement of Gen 11 reversed, through Christ's work on the cross!