Hold fast to the God of all hope!

*The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David’s earlier days and did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, followed His commandments, and did not act as Israel did. So the Lord established the kingdom in his control, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor.*

 2 Chronicles 17:3-5

When we read all the Biblical accounts of Jehoshaphat, we learn the he did his best to follow God and that God rewarded him for doing so. But we also learn that he wasn’t perfect: he made some mistakes and things didn’t always go well for him.

What we have in the imperfect king Jehoshaphat is a picture of the perfect King, Jesus. Jesus never made any mistakes, sought the will of His Father perfectly, and followed all the commandments without fail. His obedience to the Father included death on a cross in order to atone for the sins of all who will accept Him as Lord and Saviour.

Because of this, Jesus will come back and the LORD will establish a Kingdom that covers the entire world that will be under the control of King Jesus. All the world will bring tribute to Him. Jesus will have great riches and honor and glory.

His Kingdom will surpass that of Jehoshaphat; it will even surpass that of David and Solomon. How precious that we, as followers of Christ, get to be part of that Kingdom and bring Him honor. We get to do that now, and we will get to do that in the future eternity.

In Christ’s love

John

 8-7-22

Genesis 11:1-9

In this amazing account of the tower of Babel, we learn why there are lots of different languages spoken in the world. Undoubtedly, lots of different dialects have emerged in the thousands of years since Babel and some of them have become completely different languages. But here is where it began. Additionally, I hope to tie this account in with the table of nations in chapter 10, along with the second genealogy of Shem given here in chapter 11.

Language is so very important for mankind. Remember that in the beginning, God spoke all of creation into being. This means that God used language. He also endowed the first man, Adam, with a language. God brought all the animals to Adam to see what he would name them; so, Adam could already speak. God also gave Adam the ability to add to the language he had, otherwise he wouldn’t have been able to come up with names for the animals.

Certainly, Adam and Eve were given the gift of language, then children would have learned to talk in the same way they do now. The ability to communicate using words is one of the ways mankind was made specially in the image of God. God used words and mankind has the same ability. Although other creatures have some rudimentary ability to communicate, human-beings are the only ones able to talk as we do.

After the fall in the Garden of Eden, mankind got progressively worse until God finally had to act. This is when He brought about the flood. But God always had a plan to redeem mankind, so He preserved the human race through Noah and his sons. Now we see the whole earth once more in unity with its rebellion against God. God still wants to redeem His people, so instead of destroying them, He supernaturally bestows them with different languages. They can no longer be unified.

The Hebrew word that Babel derives from means “confuse”. Of course, if we can’t understand what someone is saying, we use the word “babel” to describe what they sound like to us. More importantly, this is Babylon, which shows up throughout the Bible and the course of human history: past, present, and future. Babylon is in present day Iraq, between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers.

Let’s look at where Babel comes from. We find it in the table of nations in chapter 10, starting in verse 8 with a character named Nimrod.

*Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.*

Nimrod was a descendant of Ham, but look where he went to establish his kingdom; it was in the territory of the descendants of Shem. This is because of them all speaking the same language. It didn’t matter where Nimrod went, the people could understand each other and work together. Nimrod was apparently very ambitious; he was very strong both physically and in character. If we read between the lines, he was defiant of God and determined to build his own kingdom, for his own glory.

He started off building his kingdom in the plains of Shinar. The people who lived in this region were eventually known as Chaldeans or Chaldees. This is the area that Abraham came from. This is also the birthplace of the Babylonian empire.

So, what was the problem with the tower being built in Babel? The problem was that it was all in defiance of God. Firstly, they wanted to build their tower very tall. It would have been a point of great pride to create something that would reach high above the plain of Shinar. It would be showing God what they could do; showing God that they could rival Him in reaching the heavens.

Secondly, they wanted to make a name for themselves. They wanted everyone to remember them and be amazed at their accomplishment. This tower would have in some way established their immortality. Again, it was pride; it was a desire to declare their autonomy and prove they didn’t need the Almighty.

Lastly, they wanted to keep themselves from being scattered over the face of the whole earth. Back in chapter 9 verse 1 it says, ‘*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”*’ God had made it clear that He wanted mankind to spread over the whole earth, but mankind chose to defy God and try to stay together.

It is interesting to note that unity can be good or unity can be bad. Unity is good and even necessary in the Christian church. It is important for us to realize that we all have differences and sometimes we butt heads, but Jesus commands us to put these differences aside and be unified in the truth of Christ. In the case of Babylon, the people were unified in their rebellion against God. Obviously, this is not acceptable and really, it’s ridiculous. As we read in Psalm 2, “*The kings of the earth take their stand; And the rulers take counsel together; Against the Lord and against His Anointed*.” But then it says, “*He who sits in the heavens laughs; The Lord scoffs at them.*” It is the height of foolishness to try to fight against the very God who made us.

What we read next in verse 5 is actually rather humorous. *The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.* It’s like the LORD had to come down from the heights of heaven in order to be able to see this puny tower that the sons of men were building. This is again anthropomorphic language, but we get the idea.

In verse 7, the LORD says “*Let Us*”. Once more we see the early indications of the Trinity; and in the speech God has divine council with Himself. God wants the people to separate into their different nations so He can work His plan of redemption. God’s solution is to confuse their speech. It seems to make sense that instead of each individual speaking his own language, probably each family spoke their own language. This way, each family group would stay together as they moved to different parts of the world.

As the families moved to different parts of the world and multiplied, they became the different people groups we have today. This brings a question: The account of Babel explains the different languages in the world, but does it also explain the different ethnicities that are in the world? The answer is yes. Each family that spoke a language would have had similar genetic traits; and so, as these families became nations, they would have had the similar characteristics we see today.

Did Adam and Eve, or did Noah and his wife, carry all the different genetic differences we see throughout the world today? Again, the answer is yes. Here is another demonstration of the magnificence of the LORD God.

Scientists have estimated the number of atoms in the universe; I don’t know how, but they have a huge number. The number is a one with eighty zeros after it. That’s atoms in the universe, not just the world. Scientists can calculate the number of possible combinations there are for human DNA. That number is a one with 2017 zeros after it.

Yes, human-beings carry all the possible genes for all the people groups we have on earth. Give glory to God. Paul tells us this same thing in Acts 17:26, “*and [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.*”

How does the account of the tower of Babel fit in with the table of nations given in chapter 10? We find the answer in the short statement in verse 25 of chapter 10, “*Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided.*” The debate that continues today is whether the word “earth” means the land itself or the population. I believe that it means the population.

The argument that “earth” means the land itself goes as follows: If you look at all the continents of the world, they look like they may have all fit together at one time; like a jigsaw puzzle. It appears that at one time they could have been one big land mass. This is actually likely. And the Bible supports this back in Genesis 1:9, ‘*Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so*.’ So, the indication is that all the water was gathered into one place and thus, one big land mass.

The problem with this taking place during Peleg’s time is that this separation and movements of the continents would have happened quickly. We know today that during an earthquake when the land shifts just a few inches or a few feet, the result can be huge tsunamis. If the break-up of land occurred during Peleg’s time, the world would have been covered with water again; something God said would not happen.

It makes the most sense for this massive land shift to have occurred during the flood while Noah and his family were safely on top of the water in the ark. It’s easy to see how the force of the water broke apart the land when the fountains of the deep opened up.

So, the earth being divided during the time of Peleg fits better with the population splitting up due to God confusing their language. This also fits with the way that the table of nations ends each genealogy of the sons of Noah. At the end of each genealogy is a statement about how the people were listed according to their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations. The descendants of Noah had stayed together until the days of Peleg. During his lifetime is when the tower of Babel took place, and from there the people were divided into the different ethnic groups.

There are a couple other interesting things in the table of nations and in the genealogy of chapter 11. One is chapter 10 verse 21, which is the beginning of the genealogy of Shem. *Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber*. Now, when it says “father”, it certainly means “ancestor”; because Eber is actually the great-grandson of Shem. But why would this be pointed out specially?

It is not uncommon for the name of a forebearer to change a little when it becomes the name of his tribe of offspring: The descendants of Shem are called “Semites”, the people of Esau became Edom, the descendants of Heth became Hittites. We can take the name Eber, put the letter “H” in front of it and easily come up with Hebrew.

The tribal name of “Hebrew” doesn’t show up until Genesis 14:13 where it is applied to Abraham. But the writer of Genesis is making special mention of Eber because God’s redemption of mankind will come through the Hebrews; the family of Eber.

Another interesting thing is how the genealogy of Shem is divided between chapters 10 and 11; and the division occurs at the sons of Eber. Verse 10:25 reads, “*Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan*.” As the genealogy continues, it follows the line of Joktan but says nothing about Peleg.

When the descendants of Shem are given a second time in chapter 11, Joktan isn’t mentioned and the line of Peleg is followed. Of course, this is done because this is the line that brings Abraham, and ultimately, Jesus. God is keeping careful track of the line that leads to our salvation.

Going back to the tower of Babel, it is certainly interesting to see the origin of all the languages and people groups of the earth. But there is something much deeper in significance regarding Babel. This city was a manifestation of the pride and arrogance of fallen man, and a blatant rebellion against the creator God. The system put in place here shows up throughout the Bible and currently exists in our world today.

The city of Babel is what became Babylon. In time, Babylon became a dominant world power. This force of evil is what eventually attacked the holy city of Jerusalem, led God’s people into captivity, and destroyed the magnificent temple that Solomon had built. Make no mistake, while this all took place in the physical, behind it was a malevolent evil spiritual attack on God. Now, we also know that God allowed this to take place to discipline His people who had turned away from Him. Still, the system of Babylon started by the ungodly Nimrod, was doing its best to thwart God.

While the city of Babylon was captured by the Persians, the system of evil is still in place. Babylon shows up again in the book of Revelation and plays a big part in the end times. While it is quite possible that the actual city will be rebuilt, it is certain that it also includes a world system that will again be a dominant force in the world; indeed, it is here now. It represents all the worldly thinking, and absolute rebellion against God and everything He has established as good.

In Revelation, Babylon is represented as a seductress; as a harlot. One who leads all the nations into immorality. She is called “*BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*,” and “*Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality*.”

Babylon, who started clear back in Genesis 10, is an evil system that dominates the earth. But Revelation tells us, ‘*Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.*”’ So, just as the city was defeated by the Persians, the system will be defeated by God; and all who joined with her will share in her eternal punishment. But those who have joined with Christ will share an eternity free from the influence of Babylon.

Prayer

Lord God, again we are amazed by Your word; how it keeps proving itself by all the intricate ways it interconnects with itself; by how accurate it is about things that could only be known by You. How it describes this fallen world and the spiritual forces behind it.

We are also amazed at Your Word manifest, Jesus Christ. Your mercy and love are overwhelming. In spite of the desperate evil and rebellion of mankind, You chose to send Jesus, who had to lay aside all His glory, and then suffer punishment in our place. We who deserve nothing good have received all.

Help us Lord, as we live here under the seductive influence of Babylon. Keep forefront in our minds that we are citizens of heaven. Protect us from the snares of the world, hold us to Your straight and righteous path. Strengthen us to overcome the world and persevere until our Lord Jesus comes again.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen