

“Judgment at Babel”
(Genesis 11:1-9)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation. Last week, we considered Noah’s Flood, and saw three things:

1. First, that the Lord is going to bring all the wickedness of the world into judgment.
 - a. It didn’t make the Lord happy that He had to destroy His creatures.
 - (i) The Lord said through Ezekiel, “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezek. 33:11).
 - (ii) He would rather that they had repented. But when they refused, He was pleased to satisfy His righteous justice through their destruction.
 - b. I say this to remind us of two things:
 - (i) First, we should not desire the destruction of the wicked either, but desire their repentance.
 - (ii) But second, if they will not repent and if they continue to persecute the church, we can rest in the fact that God will bring His righteous judgment on them.
 - (iii) No one will get away with anything, which means we shouldn’t become embittered and desire revenge – God will set all things right.
 - (iv) Paul writes, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19-21).
2. The second thing the Flood showed us was that the Lord will always preserve His church.
 - a. In Noah’s day, the church had shrunk to one household.
 - (i) After the revival in Enosh’s day, the church began to fall away.
 - (ii) The godly line turned from the Lord to marry into the ungodly line, merely for the sake of their physical beauty.
 - (iii) Their children persecuted the church almost to extinction.
 - (iv) But the Lord didn’t allow His work to fail – He destroyed the world of men to save His church.
 - b. This is an encouragement to us that no matter how difficult things get, the Lord will always preserve His people.
 - (i) He always watches over and protects His own.
 - (ii) Our ultimate security (insurance) is being in the ark of safety – in trusting in Christ.

(iii) If we will do only this, all will be well for us in the end.

3. Finally, we were reminded of what Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5).
 - a. The Lord took the world away from wicked men, and He gave it to Noah and his family.
 - b. The same thing will happen at the final judgment – the Lord will remove all the wicked from this world – take the world from them – purge and purify it with fire, create it anew, and give it to His saints for an everlasting possession.
 - c. If we trust in the Lord and hold fast to Him, we will inherit the earth.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we see the world again become corrupt after only a few years (relatively speaking).
 - a. All of Noah’s descendants had stayed together in one society.
 - b. They spoke the same language, and for the most part, were going the same direction, away from God.
 - c. They wanted their union to continue, because of strength in numbers.
 - d. But in this unity, there was also danger for the church – if things continued as they were, those who were the Lord’s would not be tolerated for much longer.
 - e. And so the Lord changed their languages, and dispersed them among the nations.
 - f. We’ll see that this too was His plan to advance the work of the Gospel.
2. Let’s consider three things from our text:
 - a. First, that God stopped the building of this city and tower to preserve His church.
 - b. Second, that God divided the nations and situated them with a view to the future advancement of His Gospel.
 - c. Finally, that the Lord continued to preserve the godly line through whom He would send His Son into the world.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, God put an end to the building of Babel and its tower to preserve His church.
 1. It appears that they were building this city and tower in opposition to God.
 - a. They clearly were not worshiping the true God, but the god of pride.
 - (i) They wanted to make a name for themselves, stay together as one people with one language, and maintain the advantages this brought.
 - (ii) They wanted to build a city and a tower that would reach up to heaven, not to honor God, but to oppose Him.
 - (a) Whether they believed they would be able to reach heaven doesn’t seem likely.
 - (b) But they certainly intended the city and tower to unify them, as a rallying point, to keep them from being dispersed over the earth.

- (c) If they had succeeded, it might have kept all the enemies of the church together, and they might have become too powerful and put an end to the city of God.
- b. Perhaps a prophet in the camp of the saints was telling them of God's intention that they disperse after the flood and populate the world, and they resisted that plan.
 - (i) Perhaps because of this, they intended to unite together against God and His plan.
 - (ii) This city historically is the same city as Babylon. In the Babylonian tablets, there is a record of this event, and of the creation and the deluge.
 - (iii) In Scripture, Babylon was consistently opposed to the city of God – to Jerusalem.
 - (iv) Even though the Lord stopped them here, they were still an enemy to His people; but they would have been much more powerful if the Lord hadn't intervened.
2. The way He put an end to this work was by confusing their speech.
- a. They all spoke the same language up to that point – perhaps Hebrew, as our brother Carl Erickson believes, the language we may all speak in the New Heavens and the New Earth.
 - b. But God came down and confused their language (v. 7).
 - (i) He gave them the supernatural gift of tongues – only it instantly became their native tongue – and He gave no one the gift of interpretation.
 - (ii) Linguistics would have been non-existent in those days. They may not have known there was a way to overcome the language barrier. But they didn't even attempt it, perhaps because God didn't allow them to.
 - (iii) That was all the Lord had to do to stop the work.
 - c. It's interesting that the first thing the Lord did, when it was time to bring the nations together again through the Gospel, was to give the gift of tongues.
 - (i) After the work of Christ was complete, on the day of Pentecost, when the Lord poured out of His Spirit, He gave this gift as a sign – some believe also as a language to evangelize.
 - (ii) Here He intended it to have exactly the opposite effect – to gather His people together into one from all the nations.
 - (iii) At Babel it was meant to confuse and divide; at Pentecost to unite.
3. But again, clearly the Lord intended this to preserve His church and to promote the work of redemption.
- a. In advancing His work of setting up the Kingdom of His Son, He must bring down the pride of man.
 - b. Isaiah writes, "For the LORD of hosts will have a day *of reckoning* against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased. And *it will be* against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the lofty mountains,

against all the hills that are lifted up, against every high tower, against every fortified wall, against all the ships of Tarshish and against all the beautiful craft. The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (2:12-17).

- c. This is exactly what He intends to do through the Gospel ministry today as well: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
 - d. What the Lord must do in our hearts to advance His kingdom, is the same He must do in the world to advance His kingdom.
 - e. He establishes His kingdom by bringing down the pride of man.
- B. Second, the Lord divided the nations and strategically positioned them for the future advancement of His Gospel.
1. Immediately after the building stopped, the Lord scattered them throughout the face of the earth.
 - a. He also did this to advance His work of redemption.
 - b. Not only would it preserve the church from her enemies, it would also serve in the future propagation of the Gospel, since He centrally located Canaan and placed the nations around it.
 - c. Moses writes, “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel” (Deu. 32:8).
 - d. And Paul said to the philosophers on Mars Hill, “And He 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, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27).
 - e. Edwards writes, “The land of Canaan was the most conveniently situated of any place in the world for the purpose of spreading the light of the gospel thence among the nations in general. The inhabited world was chiefly in the Roman empire in the times immediately after Christ, which was in the countries round about Jerusalem, and so properly situated for the purpose of diffusing the light of the gospel among them from that place. The devil seeing the advantage of this situation of the nations for promoting the great work of redemption, and the disadvantage of it with respect to the interests of his kingdom, afterward led away many nations into the remotest parts of the world, to that end, to get them out of the way of the gospel. Thus he led some into America, and others into northern cold regions, that are almost inaccessible.”
 - f. This is an interesting perspective on westward migration, but it may very well be true. All the Lord does is to promote the work of His redemption, while all the enemy does is to oppose it.

2. We need to see that the Lord has strategically placed us where He has as well, that we might reach those around us.
 - a. This is true of us as parents in our families.
 - b. This is true of us as children in our more extended families.
 - c. It's also true of us as neighbors and as workers.
 - d. The Lord superintends the events of our lives – including the people we meet – that we might be salt and light to them.
 - e. This perspective will be helpful to us as we gear up this year for Caroling and Evangelism.
- C. Finally, the Lord continued to preserve the line through whom He would send His Son into the world
1. It didn't take long for the true religion to be rejected by Noah's family.
 - a. We don't know exactly how long, but we can get a pretty good idea from the genealogies in Genesis 10 and 11.
 - (i) Genesis 10:25, tells us when the earth was divided – in the days of Peleg: “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.”
 - (ii) We learn from the genealogies that Peleg was born about 100 years after the Flood.
 - (iii) It didn't take long for the world to forget the judgment of God, or His mercy. God had saved all these families in Noah and had promised a wonderful preservation of the world. But instead of being thankful and walking in His ways, they fell again into idolatry and sin.
 - b. Before Abraham, the world had almost entirely turned away from the Lord again.
 - (i) Even the godly line was being affected with idolatry. We read in Joshua 24:2, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.’”
 - (ii) They didn't fall entirely into idolatry. God was said to be the God of Nahor (Gen. 31:53). It shouldn't surprise us since this was something many of the Israelites would have to deal with for some time (Solomon; Israel served other gods in Egypt, while the true church was among them; some in Jacob's family kept images).
 2. Here was the second time the church was almost destroyed.
 - a. The god of this world wanted to destroy her, but the Lord did not allow the gates of hell to overcome it.
 - b. This confirms for us again that whatever the Lord purposes to accomplish, He will do.
 - c. This is why Paul writes, “*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).
 - d. No matter what we will have to face as a church, in the end we will win, because this is God's work that He has pledged to complete. Amen.