
Day 4 - January 4

Beginning of Early Humankind (Creation to 2100 BCE)

Dispersion of the Human Family

Beginning of the Nations

Descendants from Shem to Abram

Readings: *Genesis 10:1-11:26*

Reflections:

- This is an interesting story for a number of reasons. Although we focus on the tower of Babel, it was a city with a tower, likely a pyramid structure. It wasn't just a tower but a kingdom of sorts. They wanted a city to boast in and the tower was the symbol of attempting to elevate themselves up to "be like God." Sound familiar? There is a clear direct parallel to the deception of Adam and Eve and the very heart and purposes of these people.
- This building project immediately follows Noah's great construction of the ark. Although it looks like complete insanity for one guy to build a huge boat where there is no water, it brings about universal salvation. Here this entire city of people set out to build something great to reveal their wisdom and pride. It brings about universal judgment. In the unfolding narrative, the book of Genesis contrasts over and over that there are two ways to live. Here we see Noah and the people of Babel again provide a vivid contrast between trusting God even when it looks crazy and trusting yourself in your own pride.
- God affirms the power of those he has made in their image, especially when they work together in unity. "Nothing they plan will be impossible for them." This is an important reminder of the power we as people have when we join forces behind a common cause. In this case, they were using this power of unity for prideful reasons. This same power when focused on God's purposes becomes an unstoppable force for good.
- So this story gives us insight into advancing the city of God...his kingdom. First, we need to speak the same language so that we can truly understand each other. We need to work at finding a common way of talking and understanding so that we can overcome misunderstanding and potential division. Second, we need to be completely unified as a community under God's leadership. We need to work with confidence knowing that if God is with us and we are united anything is possible.

- Now, these people were motivated by pride and so God supernaturally confuses their language and disperses them into all the languages of the earth. In Acts 2, God reverses this judgment through the gift of tongues, supernaturally allowing all languages to hear the good news. In the kingdom, this curse of many languages is undone and tongues become the sign of God breaking this curse.
- There are a number of interesting points about this genealogical record in Genesis. The Japhethites' line receives the least amount of attention because they will ultimately have the least amount of contact with Israel. Great attention is given to the descendents of Ham because according to the Biblical account they will populate the Egyptian, Canaanite and Arabian nations. Nimrod is noted as the first to form a monarchy and establishes what will become Babylon. Ham's descendents through Canaan will be of great significance as they will be in constant conflict with Israel as prophesied by Noah. The descendents of Shem, called Shemites or later Semites, will form the Syrian, Assyrian, Joktanite and Hebrew nations. It is interesting to note the Biblical paradigm within these genealogies. The simple lesson: we were all family at one time. Even our greatest enemies, if you go back far enough, are family. This perspective seems to set the stage for the time when Jesus will teach something completely counterintuitive to the human heart: enemy love.
- We also see the decreasing life spans in this record. Is this from a degenerating human DNA, did their record keep changing over time or were the original long lives a part of oral tradition that was more myth than fact? Different Biblical scholars hold different positions.
- The story of Terah's family is of importance as it sets the stage for Abram's interaction with Lot. In a sense, the genealogical record sets the stage for the unfolding drama. It helps the reader make all the connections.