

## Beginnings 8 - The Calling

We have looked at the course of history marching on in Genesis 1-9. In chapters 1-3, we have seen how that God had established His order in the Garden of Eden and how man failed in the responsibility given to him and was removed from the Garden. In chapters 3-7, we saw how God restored order with sacrifices in place but man then failed in his responsibility to live by his conscience before God and was destroyed in the flood. In chapters 8-9, we then saw how God restored order giving man an expanded responsibility to govern himself. This brings us to chapters 10-11 today. Let's start with chapter 11 to look at the main historical event.

You might already be sensing a pattern here and expect to see how man will fail in this responsibility also.

### 1. Idolatry is bad.

Gen 11:1-9 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9Therefore is the name of it called Babel; 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.

The story here is pretty straight forward. In the city of Babel, they decided to build a tower that reached into the heavens and to maintain a united strength by establishing a name for themselves. When God made a visitation

to them, He chose to break them apart by confusing their languages so that they would not repeat the problem of those before the flood to fulfill their imaginations and be filled with only evil continually. As a result, the people left off building the tower and were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth.

The immediate application of this event would be to condemn idolatry. You can still see the remains of towers that were built in the ancient world for their pagan gods and worship. In Mesopotamia they were called ziggurats. Worshiping the host of heaven from high places is so often associated with it that it was no wonder that after the tower of Babel you can find temples built on the them. In South America and Egypt they are known as pyramids. Others were not towers but were built on high places like the Pantheon on the Acropolis in Greek Athens. As you read through 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles, you find that there was always a problem with the people worshiping in the "high" places. Zephaniah complained about this:

Zeph 1:5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

What you find in Genesis 11 is the essence of idolatry. Idolatry is merely a reflection of the heart. Many times idolatry involves physical representations of false gods, but false gods are actually only a representation of the imaginations of man. In their pride, they sought to make a name for themselves in order to keep their unity and power.

So far, if you are just reading the Bible casually, this would be an impressive lesson if you stopped here. You would come to the conclusion that idolatry is bad. Don't be prideful and make idols. Idols are just a reflection of your own rebellious nature. When you look at the tower of Babel in the surrounding context from the chapters before, though, a more sophisticated analysis emerges.

Earlier, God had commanded Noah and his family to replenish the earth.

Gen 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

Instead of going out into the whole earth, the people were bent on not being scattered abroad according to Genesis 11:4.

Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

In His visitation, God made a strategic strike that brought a stop to all of this. He confused their language so that they could not proceed any further. Linguists have identified 50 "proto," or root, languages where our modern languages come from. Of course, linguists can only go back so far in their analysis and so determining 50 is pretty impressive. If you went all the way back to Babel, you would undoubtedly find that a number of proto languages sprang forth at that time. What is significant to us is that people were divided by language. Esperanto was a language that was developed in the late 1800s to try to unify people linguistically, but it really hasn't caught on. Isn't it interesting that today, people are trying to control language for the purpose of trying to establish unity? If people don't follow the united way of saying things, they find themselves locked out of Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

The people tried to make a name for themselves, or create a united identity in the face of God's command to go out into the earth. They had a place for worship in the tower that also defied God. Look at the very materials of the tower:

Gen 11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

Burnt brick and slime, or tar, were waterproof materials. When you consider that they had a recent worldwide flood it doesn't take much imagination to guess at what they were doing in spite of the fact that God had testified to them by His rainbow that there would be more destruction of the earth by flood. On top of this, we know that Nimrod was the builder of Babel:

Gen 10:9-10 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

10And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

He was not just the builder of Babel, but he was one who forced people into this kingdom united against God. He is described as a mighty hunter, but this does not mean he was a great sportsman. He was a might hunter before the Lord. the phrase "before the Lord" has the sense of being against God. God's plan was to have people disperse and populate the earth, but Nimrod was against God, developing a united kingdom that stood in opposition to God. His united kingdom was marked by the pride of man and the vain attempt to protect themselves from their imagination of God's judgment. And, all were to be brought under that rule.

This is not just a story of the idolatrous nature of man. This goes far beyond to man's failure to exercise Godliness in the governmental responsibilities given to him. It ends up in man's corruption of the responsibility given to him and his judgment to be dispersed.

## 2. The dispensational context

There is yet a larger context to be considered here. We should have sensed a pattern developing:

- God establishes His order and gives responsibilities to man.
- Man corrupts God's order and fails in his responsibilities.
- God brings judgment.

We saw this in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, their fall, and their expulsion. We saw this in the establishment of the blood shed to cover man's sin, the failure of man living by conscience before God, and the flood. We now see this in the covenant with Noah and the establishment of government, the Tower of Babel, and the confusion of languages. This process goes on in the rest of the Bible. Each time God reimposes order and expanded responsibility, man fails, God judges, and a new order is established. In theology, this is called *Dispensationalism*. It comes from a word that refers to the management of a household. To *dispense* refers to an apportionment, or an allotment. History comes to us through apportionments of responsibility. The Tower of Babel is not just a lesson in morality. That is only one aspect of what is happening here in the course of God showing us a major move in the development of history. This is what is called a philosophy of history where we look for meaning in history.

When we look at history, we should not just be interested in events and what caused them to happen. A philosophy of history seeks to find some driving force throughout the course of history. Karl Marx only saw man's struggle as a quest for power as a driving force between classes until all power is evenly distributed as evidenced by equal well being with no more classes. There is no difference between what Marx taught, what Nimrod sought, and what the Antichrist will temporarily and imperfectly achieve.

That Babel was an idolatrous kingdom should be sufficient proof that it was a Satanic. Nimrod and company were not just superstitious. Superstition might be considered a matter of the imagination. You see a butterfly land on a tombstone and your dearly departed loved butterflies so you assume that the butterfly is a visit from your loved one to cheer you. Setting up Babel was an affront and a challenge to God. But God is never under any threat. Satan is being held back till he who letteth will let

(2Thess 2:7). according to God's timing.

There *is* a driving theme through history, but it is God's plan. By a philosophy of history we see a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward ultimate meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Gal 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,  
5To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Eph 1:4-14 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **[Those who would, by faith, become placed in Jesus Christ, are chosen ones because we are in Jesus who is the chosen of God]**

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

5Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **[In God's plan, we predestined to the resurrection as Paul defined the adoption in Romans 8:23]**

6To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **[In God's plan, Jesus was sent to be rejected of men and bear our sins.]**

10That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

11In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*

own will: **[God's ultimate plan is to bring all the redeemed together in Christ, this is the ultimate end of all the previous dispensations.]**

12That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. **[The final ultimate meaning is the glory of God.]**

### 3. The Calling

We now have to go back to Genesis to see what is supposed to come out of the Tower of Babel event. It is not sufficient for us to just look at that judgment and be stricken with the awesome judgment that came down on man. The end of a Dispensation marks the beginning of a new Dispensation. Yes, man failed in his responsibility to live by Godly government. He perverted it for his own power and glory in the face of God. God judged them and dispersed them. It is in this context that we can appreciate the launch into the next Dispensation.

Many times we see Bible stories placed in contrast one against another. This is so true here. It would take about three hundred years, but out of that same region Abraham emerges. At the end of Genesis 11, we see that Abram (this is what Abraham was originally named) leaves Ur of the Chaldees with his father and nephew, but it is in Genesis 12 that we see why.

Gen 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

He was called out of an idolatrous culture and an idolatrous family. He was to separate himself even from His father and cousin. His father died before Abraham got to the promised land and he separated from Lot not long after.

Remember the course of a Dispensation:

- God's order
- Man's failure

- God's judgment

But at the end of the Dispensation, there is the redemptive work of God which begins the next Dispensation. This is what Abraham and his family were supposed to be engaged in. God called Abraham to this redemptive work in which all the families of the world would be blessed. In spite of the fact that the Dispensations to follow would have their failure's and judgment, nevertheless God's plans would not be thwarted. Abram, which means exalted father, became Abraham, the father of many as the father of faith in Jesus Christ Who did indeed bless all the families of the earth.

Gal 3:6-8 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

In our Dispensation for our time, we are similarly called. The question is whether we are going to be part of the failure by which this age is judged, or will we be partners in the calling of God?

1Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

2Tim 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Jas 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

1Pet 1:14-16 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

1Pet 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the

praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

2Pet 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

God is calling you out of the world of sin and dominion of Satan. He is calling you to salvation in Christ and His glorious kingdom. If you are saved, then we need to separate ourselves for God's glory and work.

1. Idolatry is bad. Gen 11:1-9, Zeph 1:5, Gen 9:1, 11:4, 11:3, 10:9-10
2. The dispensational context Gal 4:4-5, Eph 1:4-14, Isa 42:1
3. The Calling Gen 12:1-3, Gal 3:6-8, 1Tim 6:12, 2Tim 1:9, Jas 2:23, 1Pet 1:14-16, 1Pet 2:9, 2Pet 1:3