

A World In Making

Table Of Nations

Genesis 10

Sunday July 4th 2010 Morning Service

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What are we to make of a passage like this? It is easy to simply skip it, believing it has no practical relevance for us today, filing it as mere background information. But surely this does not fit in with 2 Timothy 3:16, which tells us that 'all Scripture' is 'useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.' In the light of this we must approach a passage like this with an attitude of faith and expectation, believing that God has something important to reveal to us here.

1. God's favour to humanity – love people

a. God's love for people

The Lord delighted in humanity spreading – he loves people. He loves families; he loves children; he provides for all these people – seedtime and harvest (Acts 14:17). This should characterise our attitudes to people, of whatever age or culture

b. God's gift of skills given to people

The Lord gives abilities for the development of mankind. Nimrod was a hunter, an organiser and a builder. Then there were the sea-faring races. Gifts and abilities in all their diversity are given by God. No one's gifts are to be looked down on; we should not expect everyone to be the same. We should delight in the giftedness of people.

c. God's gift of diversity to people

The Lord delights in all our diversity – our cultures, clothes, education, history, art, buildings and skills. Something of the 'breadth of God' is seen in the 'breadth of humanity.' Every nation depicts something of the glory of God – even though the Fall has damaged, warped and corrupted this revelation. We can enjoy the multiplicity of human cultures with all their varying expressions of human creativity. The Fall affects different cultures in slightly different ways – yet there is still something to be savoured and enjoyed. Something about humanity reflects the greatness of God. This is very life-affirming.

2. Human Sinfulness – flee temptation and sin

a. The Remembrance of the Flood

This chapter begins and ends with a reminder of the Flood. The point is obvious: do not forget, although he will not totally flood the earth again, God will judge sin (2 Peter 3:3-13). This memory of the Flood spread out as humanity spread across the globe. Many cultures have flood stories that can be explained as the distant memory of the Flood at Noah's time. This is evidence of biblical accuracy to strengthen our faith and remove our doubts.

b. The Rise of a Leader into Sin

The Rise of Nimrod – the Builder of Babel

A gifted man (8-9) - hunter, organiser and builder. Hunter may mean a hunter of men – i.e. a ruthless tyrannical dictator who consolidated his kingdom of the Euphrates.

A great city - Babel – later Babylon. This is a biblical synonym for rebellion against God.

A gross sin

Babel was a centre of pride

Good gifts can be used for proud ends. Pride is the original sin of Satan – 'I will ascend!' (Is 14:13-14). Pride is the original temptation to Adam and Eve – 'You will be like God' (Gen 3:5) If pride is so dangerous we must flee from it at all costs.

Babel was a centre of pagan worship

Why did the flood come? Why did God later judge Canaan? It was violence and paganism: Baal worship. The tower was used for worship - a Ziggurat. Nimrod was an example and a leader. Nimrod teaches us that People can lead us into sin – the dangers of the role model and the leader. This is true at an individual level; this is true at a group level; this is true at a national and international level. Pick your role models carefully. Nimrod's strengths were his weaknesses. Our strengths are often our weaknesses. Nimrod points to the coming of the Anti-Christ, the Man of Lawlessness (2 Thess 2; 1 John 2:18)

c. The rise of a people of particular sin

We have already seen that the people of Canaan have been cursed (Gen 9:25-27). Here we now see these people spread and grow. They would become so evil that they would have to be wiped out – first Sodom and Gomorrah and then, later, the whole of the Canaanite peoples. They were sinful in their pagan worship (Dt 18:9-13) and their sexual perversions (Lev 18). They were not eradicated, but became an infection to the Israelites in drawing them to the worship of the Baals. We see here that Sin spreads – it spreads in influence and in individual lives. Unless radical action is taken it will always spread – it is a disease. This is true personally and it is why Jesus said that if our eye causes us to sin we should pluck it out; radical action is need against personal sin as well as corporate sin.

3. God's Grace to Humanity – turn to Christ

a. God is patient in not bringing total judgement and destruction on humanity:

Even with all this sin he does not bring total devastation like a Flood – that will have to wait until Day of Judgement. This patience is to give us time to repent and turn to God. We do not deserve this time to turn. We must make use of it.

b. God is patient in working out the promise of the coming Messiah

The promise of Gen 3:15. There is the promised line here in the line of Shem – the Semites. See verse 22 and 11:24-26. This is the line of Abraham; the line of faith. Shem – Arphaxad – Shelah – Eber – Peleg (the time of the Tower of Babel) – Reu – Serug – Nahor – Terah – Abram – 12: 3 – ‘all the people of the earth will be blessed through you.’ The whole of the OT is pointing towards the coming Messiah

c. God works in the lives of individuals

Noah – Abraham. The genealogies are lists of real people; these are real individual people. God works out his purposes in our individual lives. He knows us by name; he loves us individually. He knows and is interested in our individual life stories.

d. All of history was pointing towards the coming of Jesus

And all of history now is pointing to his Second Coming. Jesus is the centre of history. He came to die for our sins to provide us forgiveness; he will come again to take us to be with him forever.

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