

What's the Message – Lesson Seven

Today's we continue our study of the often-ignored early chapters of Genesis.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. As always, our prayer for you is that the Lord will bless you through today's study. Also, that it would awake a desire in your heart to dig deeper into God's Word and discover new insights that can enhance your understanding of how He cares for you. Amen.

Last time we saw that God's patience with sinful mankind had reached the point where He had determined to destroy everyone except Noah and his family, and to start over with a "new creation." Today's lesson takes us into Chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis and the story of the Tower of Babel.

But it begins in chapter 10 with a lengthy account of the genealogy of the sons of Noah, an account that most people usually want to skip over because of the unfamiliar names listed, names that we have difficulty even pronouncing.

To complicate matters further, upon closer look we see more than one name given to the same person and we get confused about who is who. Then the names are given in different sequences and we lose track of who is being referred to.

For example: verse one of chapter 10 gives the sequence of Noah's sons beginning with Shem, but in the rest of the chapter the sequence begins with Japheth . . . and only until we read verse 21 do we find that Japheth is the eldest, with Shem actually being the youngest, and even there Shem is referred to as Eber. Confusing to say the least.

In addition, the event of the first nine verses of chapter 11 belong in chronological sequence in the middle of chapter 10. How can you keep this straight in your mind? No wonder people want to skip over this and ignore it.

But scholars have been fascinated with this account for many years . . . and archeologists, anthropologists, and historians of many kinds have used this listing as a starting point to track the dispersion of people across the world. For example, under the sons of Ham we find Cush, and then Nimrod who is described as “*a mighty one in the earth.*” Nimrod established a kingdom and made Babylon its capital, then built several more of the ancient cities between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Another son of Ham was named Canaan, whose name was applied to the area where he initially settled. His descendants included the Phoenicians, those ancient seafaring traders who spread around the Mediterranean Sea.

And Shem is referred to as *the father of all the children of Eber*. Now, Eber actually was a great-grandson of Shem, and from Eber we trace the Hebrews. In verse 25 we see that Eber had a son named Peleg, *for in his days the earth was divided*. That tells us that the dispersion of people in Babel happened about the time Peleg was born, for his name means “division.” This puts a time-marker on the event, about 130 years after The Great Flood.

So that brings us to chapter 11 where we read: *Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there . . . Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.* You know how the story ends, the Lord confused their language so that they could not communicate with each other and could not complete the construction. It was complete confusion, for that is what the word “babel” means . . . confusion.

In brief summary, those are the essential facts of what happened. Now, what does it all mean for us? Teacher, what is the message we want to take from all this?

There are two points that we want to make here. First, that digging into the details that lead up to the event is like trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle. It requires some detective work, and the more we dig, the more we discover. It will be the same throughout the rest of the Bible. There are discoveries to be made, and there can be excitement in making those discoveries and gaining greater insights into God's message. We encourage you to take this approach and attitude in your Bible study. You might even get excited about the joy of discovery.

Second. Why did God decide to cause confusion among the people? It was only a relatively short period of time since the Flood, just the fifth generation after Noah. You would think that the memory of the Flood and what happened to their forefathers would still be fresh in the minds of these people. But how quickly we forget both God's grace and His demand for obedience.

It is easy for us to see the mistakes of these people, but so hard to recognize our own failures to obey God's will. So God scattered them because of their pride.

They wanted to make a name for themselves and reach up to heaven. Once again, God showed them that they could not ever be "like God" as Satan had promised to Eve. It is a lesson we still need to learn today.

Next time we will meet a man who obeyed God and followed His will.

This series has been developed and written by our director of teacher training, Mr. D. A. Senter, and is copyrighted by Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Flower Mound, Texas. Your narrator is Dale Gaus.

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