

GENESIS—Seed of the Bible
Session Six: Brave New World

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GOD HAD SEEN NOAH and his family safely into the Ark together with the nucleus of a renewal of his creation—and then set about the destruction of everything else. Five months floating on a shoreless sea would seem interminable to Noah and his family—they must have felt that God had forgotten them. But not so—"God remembered Noah, and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark," Yet a flood covering even the mountains would require a long length of time to subside, even with the wind God sent to help in this.

However, the sources from which the water came were stopped. If a tidal wave had emanated from the seas, this ceased to exert its power, and of course the rain from heaven no longer fell. This itself would be a welcome relief to the people in the ark.

Yet at the end of 150 days the ark only grounded in the mountains of Ararat: there was still no land visible. (v. 4). Four and one half months later the tops of the mountains were seen (v.5). Allowing forty days more, Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven, and the raven did not return (v. 7). He also sent out a dove as a test, but the dove did not find any favourable circumstances and returned to the ark (v.9).

Now ten and a half months had passed since Noah's entering the ark. He removed the covering of the ark and found the face of the ground dry (v. 13). Yet of course it would be dry on the higher elevations where the ark was, while requiring more time in lower areas to have the waters recede. So that verse 14 tells us that it was about two months later that the earth was dried.

This total time amounts to one year and ten days (cf. Genesis 7. 11 and 8. 14).

WHEN THEY WERE FINALLY RELEASED into the newly-purged world, Noah led his family in an act of worship and thanksgiving. He showed no resentment toward God—if anything God's terrible judgment of the ungodly world increased within the new father of the race a healthy, reverential fear of the God of all the earth.

The end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9 record God's blessing of this small group of people, and tell of the Covenant that he made with them. This time things look good, we have a new beginning with a new Covenant ... a brave new world with a bright new future!

It seems as though the Lord's judgements have "paid off".

We can say then, that after the flood mankind was given a fresh start. But, as it had been under Adam so it was again—failure and sin rapidly took over. We have been given abundant testimony to the fact that Noah was a godly man who found grace in the sight of the Lord. Then we have been told that he lived for no less than 350 years after the flood. Yet the one and only thing on record concerning him in all those years is that he planted a vineyard, made wine, was lured into self-indulgence, and became unconscious in a drunken stupor! The man most responsible now to control others lost control of himself.

The new age broke down at the outset, even in the hands of a godly man.

The "brave new world" is beginning to crack!

IT IS OUR COMMON EXPERIENCE that one bad thing leads to another. Noah lies stupefied and naked in his tent, and Ham walks in on him. When he saw his father in such a condition, rather than trying to help the old man recover, rather than protecting his father's honour, he went outside and called his brothers, seizing the opportunity to defame his father, his father's God, and the worship of God his father had taught him.

God commands children to revere their parents. Ham despised his father. Remember, Ham was not a boy. This was not a childish taunt. Ham was a grown man. He was at least 100 years old.

The story is told with restraint and delicacy, yet it is possible that there is more to it than at first appears. *Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.* This seems to indicate that whatever happened to Noah, it was more than one of his sons or grandsons seeing his nudity. The phrase 'saw his father's nakedness' may be a euphemism for something worse, and this may be the first recorded homosexual act. One commentary says: "There seems to be a careful avoidance of particularity. The language has an euphemistic look, as though intimating something too vile and atrocious to be openly expressed".

Whatever the facts, we see a slow yet certain deterioration in the state of humanity: a deterioration that will continue until things become as bad as they ever had been.

THE STORY OF THE BRAVE NEW WORLD continues in Genesis 11. We have moved from a family to a whole world of people. This is how the record continues:

The whole world had only one language. All people spoke it. They moved to the east and found a broad valley in Babylonia. There they settled down. They said to each other, "Come. Let's make bricks and bake them well." They used bricks instead of stones. They used tar to hold the bricks together. Then they said, "Come. Let's build a city for ourselves. Let's build a tower that reaches to the sky. We'll make a name for ourselves. Then we won't be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, "They are one people. And all of them speak the same language. That is why they can do this. Now they will be able to do anything they plan to. Come. Let us go down and mix up their language. Then they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over the whole earth. And they stopped building the city. The LORD mixed up the language of the whole world there. That's why the city was named Babel. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

—Genesis 11:1-9 NIV.

There is an important sentence here which betrays the fundamental purpose for their actions: **We'll make a name for ourselves.** An arrogant, blasphemous pride was here combined with a cringing fear of the avenging justice of the Lord. They were full of enmity toward God; their purpose was to defy His almighty power and to make this city with its tower the centre of the world.

Yet there is also a matter of greater significance: **Let's build a city for ourselves.** The same purpose that gripped the heart of rebellious Cain fired their ambition.

ALTHOUGH THE BIBLE TELLS of the confusion of language and the scattering of people, its major concern is revealed in the name of the place—Babel. Itself signifying the "babbling" of the people, yet its prophetic significance is possibly of the greater importance. For here we have the beginning of yet another biblical theme—the city of Babylon.

Babylon begins as a dream in Genesis and ends in the nightmare of the world's end as told in the final book of the Bible.

THE TRUE PEDIGREE of this infamous city of Babel [Babylon] is hidden in the previous chapter:

Cush fathered Nimrod, who became the first fearless leader throughout the land. He became a fearless hunter in defiance of the Lord. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a fearless hunter in defiance of the Lord." His kingdom began in the region of Shinar [Babylonia] with the cities of Babylon, Uruk, Akkad, and Calneh. From there he went north to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, along with Resen, which was located between Nineveh and the great city of Calah.

—Genesis 10:8-12 ISV

The attitude of this man is like that of Cain ... his founding of cities is an act of defiance towards God. Equally, his reputation as a hunter was more sinister than appears on first reading the account. This is not talking about Nimrod's ability to hunt wild game. He was not a hunter of animals. He was a hunter of men—a warrior. "It was through his ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom of the Euphrates valley city states was consolidated." (Boice)

"He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, 'Depart from the judgment of the Lord, and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!' Therefore it is said: 'As Nimrod the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord'."

ONCE AGAIN what God has begun, our "brave new world", is doomed to judgement and destruction. Yet that judgement lies in the far distant future. It will come when the words of Revelation are fulfilled:

With a mighty voice he shouted: "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.

—Revelation 18:2 NIV

The story will bring us to a new beginning, introduced at the end of Genesis 11, but starting properly in the twelfth chapter. It commences with the history of a family. It contains a new Covenant. It is the seed of a new nation.

It is the promise to Eve re-stated and enlarged.

