

Hymns: 15 It Is Well With My Soul 8 Great is Thy Faithfulness
Psalm 46

Today we're going to take a trip – to a land far away and a time long ago. We're going to the cradle of civilization to witness how **nations** were first formed. The time is approximately 2300 B.C. and the place a fertile plain called Mesopotamia situated between two rivers. Can anyone name them? That's right -- the Tigris and Euphrates. We'll see men given simple instructions from God **defy** God and **follow** their own ambitions.

Human Government

We're moving ahead with our study of the third dispensation called *human government*. Details of this dispensation appear in just 96 verses of Genesis of which 54 are genealogies. The dispensation lasted only 220 years. Last time we looked at:

1. Emergence of people and animals from Noah's ark
2. Noah's blood sacrifice
3. The change of the animals to **fear** man
4. The change of man's diet to include meat
5. God's law regarding murder and **blood**

We'll pick up there.

Gen. 9

First God gives a command and blessing:

[7] And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

Next He pronounces the first **promise** framed as a **covenant** in the Bible:

[8] And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

*[9] And I, behold, I establish **my covenant** with **you**, and with **your seed** after you;*

*[10] **And with every living creature** that is with you,*

of the fowl,

of the cattle,

and of every beast of the earth with you;

from all that go out of the ark,

to every beast of the earth.

Here God is fulfilling the promise He made to Noah in Genesis 6:18 – the first reference to the word *covenant* in the Bible.

*[11] And I will establish **my covenant** with you;*

1. neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood;

2. neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

[13] I do **set my bow in the cloud**, and it shall be for **a token of a covenant** between me and the earth.
[14] And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the **bow shall be seen in the cloud**:

[16] And the **bow shall be in the cloud**; and I will **look** upon it, that I may remember the **everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of **all flesh** that is upon the earth.

We will formally consider this important idea of God's **covenant** when we look at the next dispensation, but for now let's just observe some things involved in this one.

1. From: God
2. To:
 1. Noah
 2. his descendants (that includes us)
 3. every living creature
3. Promise
 1. No more massive destruction of life on the earth by flood
 2. no more worldwide flood
4. Conditions: None
5. Term: Forever (everlasting)
6. Token: A bow in the cloud

Bow in the Cloud

Now, let's stop for a minute and consider this *bow in the cloud*. Has anyone **not** seen a rainbow? It's kind of a fun thing to look at. When a child first sees one, he looks in **wonder** at it. Even for me, after these many years, it's still **fascinating** to look at that **colorful** though **fleeting** display in the sky. Many of you may have seen even **double** and **triple** rainbows.

Here's one you may not have seen. I remember flying above the clouds one day (in a jet plane). The blue expanse above engulfed white fluffy clouds below. Then I saw it – an **inverted** rainbow! It was an arch, but it was positioned upside down. Apparently, these are formed by ice crystals. It was quite a shock. God said when He sees a **bow** in the cloud, He will **remember** His covenant. It doesn't matter to Him whether it's upside down or not. He actually made both types.

It's also worth commenting here on another aspect of this. God created this beautiful token. Yet man has taken God's symbol and **corrupted** and **co-opted** it to represent something reprehensible – taking **something pure and Holy** and applying it to something **impure and unholy**. In a similar way, our current society has taken marriage and corrupted it as it attempts to **normalize and elevate** what the Bible calls reprobate behavior or simply sin. Keep an eye open for these kinds of tricks as I'm sure we haven't seen the last of this evil ploy.

[20] And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he **planted a vineyard**:

[21] And he

*drank of the wine, and
was drunken; and he
was uncovered within his tent.*

[22] And **Ham**, the father of **Canaan**,

*saw the nakedness of his father, and
told his two brethren without.*

[23] And Shem and Japheth [Ham's two brothers] took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

[24] And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what **his younger son** had done unto him.

[25] And he said, **Cursed be Canaan**; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

[26] And he said, **Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.**

[27] **God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.**

There are some interesting things to note here:

1. Ham was called Noah's *younger son*, yet he's listed **second** when the three names are enumerated (Shem, Ham, and Japheth).
2. Ham showed **disrespect** for his father.
3. Ham's two brothers showed **respect** for Noah.
4. Who was cursed? Canaan (Ham's son) not Ham -- the one who sinned. Why? We're not told. Where did Canaan settle? In the land of Canaan on the west coast of present-day Israel. Were these people made servants and slaves to the sons of Shem and Japheth? Yes. They were.
5. Two other things to note: the Bible uses great restraint in its narratives. We don't have further details of this sordid event because God saw fit not to give them.
6. And finally Noah himself, was a godly man like few others and one of the heroes of faith. Yet here he was shown in sin. *All have sinned*. He was no different in that regard.

[28] And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

[29] And all the days of Noah were **nine hundred and fifty years: and he died**.

Notice Noah was the last person recorded to have such a long lifespan.

Gen.10

This chapter lays out the families of the sons of Noah. We will skip the flood of names and stop only for the highlights:

[1] Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: ...

[2] The sons of **Japheth**; ...

We will skip to verse 5.

[5] By these were the isles of the **Gentiles divided in their lands**; ...

In a nutshell Japheth was the father of the Gentile nations north of Israel (Europe, Russia, etc.)

[6] And the sons of **Ham**;

Ham was the father of the people who settled in the area of Israel and southwest of Israel.

[8] And **Cush** [one of Ham's sons] **begat Nimrod**: ...

This name *Nimrod* is important. Let's look at what the Bible says about him:

[9] **He was a mighty hunter before the LORD**: ...

[10] And the **beginning of his kingdom was Babel**, and [others], in the **land of Shinar**.

Shinar is the fertile plain of Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day Iraq – the location of Babylon.

Babylon

The term used for *Babylon* appears in five different words in the Bible from the languages Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Four of those words have the literal meaning *confusion*. The last one, *Shinar* (shin·är'), means *two rivers*. Reference to this place appears **over 300 times** in the Bible showing up in the law, the prophets (including Revelation of the New Testament), poetry, a gospel, and an epistle. It's one of the most frequently cited cities in the Bible behind, of course, Jerusalem.

The actual location of ancient Babylon in the land of Shinar is 50 miles south of present-day Baghdad. Of course, Iraq remains in the news as the cities our troops risked their lives to win are now being lost to ISIS. I read in the news recently that some political leaders in Iraq want to be released from their pact with the U.S. and join forces with Russia to win back this territory. That's a sad commentary on our current military strategy.

Another reason Iraq is fresh in the news relates to its neighbors. Countries that boarder Iraq are:

- Syria
- Turkey
- Iran

All three of those countries are deeply involved in the ISIS conflict. Other neighbors are:

- Kuwait

- Saudi Arabia
- Jordan

It's fascinating that **what** God set in motion over **four thousand years ago** is still raging today and is prominent in prophecies of events still to come.

Don't lose sight of the significance of the city and tower of Babel. It represents man's defiance of God and appears throughout the Bible as:

the first Gentile kingdom,
the greatest Gentile kingdom, and
at least via metaphor the last Gentile kingdom.

It all started right here.

Verse 19 gives us the location of Canaan.

Verse 21 speaks of **Shem** and refers to his brother, Japheth as *the elder*.

*[32] These are the families of the sons of Noah,
after their generations,
in their nations:
and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.*

Let's move on to Genesis 11 to see what action prompted this division to happen.

Gen.11

*[1] And **the whole earth was of one language**, and of one speech.*

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

[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.

[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**.*

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

*[6] And the LORD said, **Behold**, the people [are] one,*

and they [] all [have] one language;

and this they begin to do:

and now nothing [which they have imagined to do] will be restrained from them.

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

[8] So the LORD **scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth**: and they [stopped building] the city.

The effort to build Babel was abruptly aborted.

[9] **Therefore 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**.

So where did these people ultimately settle? Based on the genealogies given, here's roughly what we have:

Son	Place
Japheth (the elder)	North and West of Israel (Europe, Russia, etc.)
Shem	East of Israel (Arab lands and East)
Ham (the younger)	Israel and Southwest (Africa)

Verses 10 through 29 include the genealogy that places Abram in the line of Shem.

[10] **These are the generations of Shem**:

We'll pick up the very end of this long list of names to where the mention of Abram begins.

[27] ... **Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot**.

[29] **And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; ...**

[30] **But Sarai was barren; she had no child.**

[31] **And Terah took Abram his son,**

and Lot the son of Haran his son's son,

and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife;

and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees,

to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

Summary of this Dispensation

The Context / New Administration

So we see man from a godly heritage (Noah's family) getting a new start in a purged world – a **clean slate**.

Animals were changed to fear man and were given to man for food. Blood began to flow.

The Assignment

Man was told to **fill the earth**.

The Moral Test

He was also told to not murder his fellow man for man was created in the image of God – **capital punishment came via human government**.

Finally, he was told to not eat **blood**.

The Fall

Instead, man united under a single leader and built a city in **defiance** of God and His instruction in order **to make a name for himself**.

The Judgment

God scrambled their languages and **scattered them** to create nations.

This concludes the tragic story of the **third** dispensation.

Application

So what about you?

Are you **defying God** like the people of Babel did? Perhaps you **don't even believe** in Him or if you do you **reject His offer** of eternal life through faith alone in Jesus Christ. If you die rejecting Him, **all hope is lost** and just as these men faced the **sure judgment of God** you too will **stand condemned** in your sin before a holy and righteous God and face **certain judgment**.

Or maybe you *have* accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and appropriated God's gracious gift of eternal life to yourself. Are you **living the life** that He has commanded you to live? Are you following Him and walking in the power and direction of His Holy Spirit living within you? Or are you:

striving in your own strength and
going your own way –
living without faith, and
trusting in flesh and blood to carry you through each day?

If you are, you will be miserable. Your only hope is to let the Lord guide you and strengthen you each step of the way.

Benediction

*Now the God of peace,
that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the **blood** of the **everlasting covenant**,
Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ;
to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)*

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