***The Tower of Babel and It’s Connections to New Testament Teaching***

***Introduction***

Last week during Sunday School class as we were discussing sanctification with Mark, Dan Philip asked a very interesting questions regarding the Tower of Babel. The question basically dealt with why God would separate the people all over the world in this manner when He has said in His Word that He wants all of us to be one. I hope that I have the question worded correctly. After I heard him ask that question it made me think really hard about it and ponder the reason why the event took place the way it did.

What I would like to do with all of you today is revisit the account of the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis, discuss the applications of this historical account on the future of the world and then finally discuss in what ways the Gospel of Jesus Christ works to fulfill the vision God has been orchestrating since the beginning of time.

Part 1: What happened at the Tower of babel?

**11**Now all the earth used the same language and the same words. **2**And it came about, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3**Then they said to one another, “Come, let’s make bricks and fire *them* thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. **4**And they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered abroad over the face of all the earth.” **5**Now the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the men had built. **6**And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they have started to do, and now nothing which they plan to do will be impossible for them. **7**Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” **8**So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth; and they stopped building the city. **9**Therefore it was named Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

As we begin to look at this event more clearly let’s first discuss what themes we see playing out in the account. What was the problem in this situation? What are the people trying to do and why? Why does God intervene in the situation? What is the result of the event? What applications can we draw from this event?

The problem, according to Scripture, is that the people of the time were not following the command of God which was to fill the earth and multiply. Rather than filling the earth the people all gathered together in one place because they all were of one language.

The people wanted to build a tower so that they could be like God And reach the heavens. Let’s read a complementary account of the tower by the Jewish historian Josephus:

This is the description of the building of the Tower of Babel given by Josephus. It gives more detail than the account in the Book of Genesis, including the prominent role played by the tyrant Nimrod

**Antiquities of the Jews 1:4:1-3**

1. Now the sons of Noah were three - Shem, Japhet and Ham, born one hundred years before the Deluge. These first of all descended from the mountains into the plains and fixed their habitations there; and persuaded others who were greatly afraid of the lower grounds on account of the floods and so were very loth to come down from the higher place, to venture to follow their examples. Now the plain in which they first dwelt was called Shinar. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth, - that they might not raise seditions among themselves, but might cultivate a great part of the earth, and enjoy its fruits after a plentiful manner: but they were ill instructed, that they did not obey God; for which reason they fell into calamities, and were made sensible, by experience, of what sin they had been guilty; for when they flourished with a numerous youth, God admonished them again to send out colonies; but they, imagining the prosperity they enjoyed was not derived from the favour of God, but supposing that their own power was the proper cause of the plentiful condition they were in, did not obey him. Nay, they added to this their disobedience to the divine will, the suspicion that they were therefore ordered to send out separate colonies, that, being divided asunder, they might the more easily be oppressed.

2. Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, - a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, - seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!

3. Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God: and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it it grew very high sooner than anyone could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not growing wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them divers languages, that they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon; because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, Confusion.

So, what we have are the people disobeying the commandment of God and then reaping the fruits of that rebellion. God intervened because if He did not do something to break these people apart, they would continue in their rebellion and try to do even more to overthrow God.

The result is that mankind spread out all over the world and settled in nations according to the languages they were given.

Applications:

1. The first major issue with the tower was that it was being built using the plans of man and that God was not involved in the design or the purpose of the structure. The whole project was man-based, which meant it was all about human pride and selfish desire for power. This should make us ask ourselves: Where is my focus? On what foundation am I building my life? Why do I trust in the things that I do? The only solid foundation for life is faith in God through Jesus Christ.

2. Another major lesson gleaned from this account is that God, in His infinite wisdom, allows His creation to do what it wants even if that does not include Him. With that being said, every action that man takes comes with consequences. The people began building the tower and God allowed that to go on for a time until it came to the point that He had to intervene to stop even more worse things to happen. This proves the point that if we are left to our own ways of behaving and thinking it will eventually lead to our demise without God reaching into our lives. Just like God reached out to Adam and Eve in the garden He is still reaches out to humanity offering salvation to those whom He has ordained.

3. When we revisit the purpose of the building of the tower, we see that Nimrod wanted to be able to reach heaven so that he could attain the status of God. Getting closer to heaven was not the goal in order to know God better or understand His ways, humanity wanted to overthrow God and do what the serpent tempted Eve with in the garden. “For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). This was when Eve then decided to eat the fruit, she succumbed to the desire to want to be like God. We are the beings created in God’s image. The created is not able to overtake the Creator.

4. God said in the account that if man is unified there is no limit to what they can accomplish (11:6). What can we take from this point? The church, when unified, can accomplish much for the sake of the gospel. However, if we allow disunity to enter the church and allow our own passions to guide what we do, then we will never be able to accomplish everything that God has ordained for us. Jesus, in His final prayer at the Last Supper, prayed that the church would be one just like Himself and the Father (Jn. 17:21).

**New Testament Connection**

So now we get to the point of the lesson where we see why God took this action at the Tower of Babel. I have just completed reading a book recommended by Mark Leslie called the Unseen Realm. This book outlines how the Kingdom of Heaven is structure with God and his Heavenly Council that govern the universe with Him. In the book there is a strong connection provided between the dispersing of the nations at Babel and the beginning of the process of reconnecting them at Pentecost. Let’s consider from the Babel accounts and the account of Pentecost in Acts the connections.

“So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth; and they stopped building the city” (11:8). At this point in history the people are now doing what God commended them to do after the conclusion of the flood, which was to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Since the people did not obey God’s command, He took action to make this happen.

After the nations scattered God waiting a few generations before calling Abram to leave his homeland to go to Canaan thereby establishing His covenant for the coming of the Messiah through the Jewish nation.

When the fulfilling of the time had come Jesus came through the tribe of Judah and reclaimed all of the scattered nations through His sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus opened up the kingdom of God to all people despite who they were. Not only was the salvation provided done for the Jewish nation, but God opened up this salvation to all who would call upon His name.

Let’s read the account of the Holy Spirit arriving at Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2**And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3**And tongues *that looked* like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and *a tongue* rested on each one of them. **4**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them *the ability* to speak out.

Looking closely at the account of Pentecost we see a few items that are of importance:

1. The Apostles were all together in one place- this is like the beginning of the account of the Tower of Babel when it tells us that all the people were together in one place. The major difference is that the people of Babel were together in opposition to God whereas the Pentecost account has the disciples waiting for the helper as they were instructed to do by Jesus.
2. The violent rushing wind was the arrival of the Holy Spirit. We see that the Lord came down to see the tower like He did when He came down in the form of the Spirit. The result of Babel was confusion, but the result of Pentecost was unity. Immediately after the arrival of the Holy Spirit the Apostles were able to speak in tongues of the various languages that were dispersed at the tower.
3. The Spirit gave them the ability to speak the various languages, therefore we see that the purpose of Pentecost was to reunite all the dispersed nations of the world through the good news of Gospel which is this: Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all who will put their trust in Him, not just for the house of Israel. When Christ called the Apostle Paul to witness to the Gentiles He was ushering in this new kingdom that would reverse the chaos of Babel and unite the various kingdoms into one new heavenly kingdom.

Conclusion: Why did God cause the people to be dispersed at Babel? This was His plan to redeem mankind through the calling of His chosen people who would bring all those nations back together under the umbrella of Christ who is the king of His people.