



FROM NOAH TO ABRAHAM

Reading: Genesis 9-11

The Rainbow and its Significance (Genesis 9:8-17)

After the flood God again spoke to Noah and his sons, this time telling them that He would never again destroy all living creatures with a flood. The rainbow was to be the **token** of this covenant that He had made (Genesis 9:8-10). God said, *“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a **token** of a covenant between me and the earth”* (v13).

A covenant is “a binding agreement or promise”, and as this covenant is made by God Himself, then there is no doubt that it will be fulfilled. The rainbow then is a **token, sign** or **reminder** of this covenant that God made. The wonder of the rainbow is that when we see it in the heavens at the time of rain God Himself sees it too, for He said, *“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”* (v16).

The rainbow should also cause us to realise that God will not continually tolerate wickedness and ungodliness upon the earth. It should remind us that God has judged the world in the past and that He will again judge it, as He has foretold (Acts 17:31; 2 Peter 3:3-7; Matthew 24:37-39). The judgement at the return of Christ will not be by flood, but with an exhibition of divine power that will include catastrophic destruction through earthquake (Ezekiel 38:18-23; Joel 3:12-16; Zechariah 14:1-5). All wise-hearted people will appreciate that God has provided a way to escape this judgment to come and will seek to avail themselves of it (1 Peter 3:20-21; Mark 16:15-16).

The Period from the Flood to Abraham (Genesis 9 - 11)

The period from the flood to the time when Abram (as he was first known) left Ur (Genesis 12:4) was a period of 427 years. During this time men quickly forgot the catastrophe of the flood and once again turned from God and worshipped idols.

Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. The descendants of these three sons are set out in Genesis 10. In reading through their genealogies one person stands out in particular in the line of Ham. Ham begat Cush and Cush begat Nimrod (Genesis 10:6-8).

This Nimrod was a *“mighty one in the earth”* (v8). His name means “rebellion” and shows his determination to gather around him men who would join in defiance of God. In his military might he set up a kingdom and taking to himself power and authority over his fellow men, he became their king. This is the **first kingdom** mentioned in the Bible and it had its capital at Babel in the land of Shinar (v10). In the Greek version of the Bible (the Septuagint) the name is Babylon. This kingdom became the seat of apostate worship which still persisted in the days of Daniel the prophet (Daniel 1:1-2). Apostate means “falling away”. Any religious system that has fallen away from God’s truth can be described as apostate (cp 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

In the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, “Babylon” is used to identify a false Christian religious system which will be destroyed at the return of Christ (Revelation 14:8; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)

In the days following the flood *“the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech”* (v1). Mankind had settled in the fertile plains of the Euphrates River in the area of ancient Babylon. Among them there were those who wanted to make a name for themselves (v4) and assert their dominion in the earth. They proposed to build *“a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven”* (v4). The tower, or ziggurat, was their temple where they worshipped the sun, moon and stars. In all of this we see that men were continually striving against their Creator, choosing their own worship in defiance of Him.

What was the root cause for this human inventiveness that produced this policy for unification and worship? It springs from man’s self-will. As in the beginning, here were men who wanted to devise their own form of religion. God had plainly shown the way in which He was to be worshipped. If they followed His way, they would be united, secure and happy in the knowledge



CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE MISSION

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Lesson 7

that their God was their King. They did not need a man-made kingdom like the one Nimrod established.

Verse 4

“whose top may reach unto heaven” The words “*may reach*” are not in the Hebrew. It is believed that the top of the tower was decorated with signs similar to those of the zodiac which astrologers derived from the heavenly bodies. Archaeologists have found ziggurats in the region of Babylon, which were towers more than a hundred metres high that, it was felt, took the worshippers closer to the heavens as they worshipped the heavenly bodies.

“Let us make us a name” Man in his foolish pride wanted to make a name for himself to perpetuate his memory in the earth (Psalm 49:11-13).

Verse 6

“which they have imagined to do” Here was the root of the problem again defined. It was the “*imagination of the thoughts of the heart*” that produced the evil that brought forth the judgment of the flood (Genesis 6:5). God had identified this problem again in Genesis 8:21 for “*the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth*”. Now their hearts had “imagined” the evil of establishing a religious worship that would unite man politically and religiously. God realised that if He did not stop this, then there would be once again no restraint to their wickedness.

God therefore acted by confusing their language which caused them to be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth in groups which spoke the same language. This of course brought an end to their building project, and resulted in the division of the nations as we see it today.

Verse 9

“therefore is the name of it called Babel” The word Babel means “confusion”. Where it occurs in Genesis 10:10 the Greek text (Septuagint) uses the word “Babylon”. We have in the English the word “babble” which means the unintelligible sound of many voices, none of which can be clearly distinguished. As we have mentioned, this word became the foundation title for the first Kingdom of men to be established on the earth.

Inevitably all the efforts of man to establish his own form of government or rulership fail. They will always prove futile for “*it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23). That is why God has resolved to send His Son to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9-10).

God’s Plan to Unify Mankind

Although God divided and scattered mankind by confusing their language, it is His ultimate purpose to unite every nation, tongue and people through the Gospel (Revelation 5:9-10). Jesus instructed his disciples: “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved*” (Mark 16:15-16). This extensive work of spreading the Gospel to all languages and peoples commenced on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter and the apostles were given the ability by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak in the various languages of the crowds assembled in Jerusalem for the feast (Acts 2:1-11).

Those who responded to the message of Peter and the other apostles were baptised (Acts 2:41). Thus commenced the spread of the gospel which unites men and women of all nationalities into the one family of God through Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). Later the Apostle Paul was specifically chosen to take the Gospel that was first preached to the Jews to the Gentiles (non Jews) as well (Acts 9:15; Rom 15:15-16).



CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE MISSION

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Lesson 7

Summary Points

1. The period from the Flood to Abraham saw the development of the first Kingdom initiated by man in defiance of God's rule (**Genesis 10:10**).
2. Nimrod set up the Kingdom of Babylon, the roots of which will not be eradicated from the earth until the Kingdom of God replaces all forms of man's rule from the earth (**Revelation 14:8; 17:5; 18:2,10,21**).
3. The Gospel message is designed to gather people out of all nations into the one family of God (**Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16**).

Lesson 7 - Questions

1. What do we learn from the rainbow?
2. What were the names of the three sons of Noah?
3. What is the name of the city that men commenced to build after the Flood and what does it mean?
4. What was it that motivated men to build such a city and tower?
5. What method did God use to stop the project and scatter mankind?
6. What is the name given in the Bible to the message which is preached to all people to unite them and bring them back to God?