“A City, a Tower, and a Name”

Genesis 11:1-9

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Sean Hoisington, Hayden Bible Church, 11/27/22)

From the earliest times, man has suffered from the delusion that he can control things that are out of his control: “If I just do this, my job will be so much better.” “If I just do that, she will like me for sure.” “If the election is a landslide, things will get a lot better.” “Maybe, just maybe, if we could control everything, good things will happen.” Our scripture today tells of an ancient people seeking security by their own efforts, ignoring God’s sovereign hand. (Prov. 18:11; Isa. 5:21) Sounds a lot like people today, doesn’t it? **While our secular society pretends that there is no God, those who follow Christ live by His Holy Word**.

Instead of moving and filling the whole earth (Gen. 9:1), these people stopped and settled on the plains of Shinar. The ruler there was named Nimrod, which meant “we shall rebel.” Kinda tells you where this story is going, doesn’t it?! This people tried to do what made sense to themselves (pragmatism) instead of seeking Wisdom from above. Gen. 11:4 tells that they wanted to build a “city for ourselves,” a “tower for ourselves,” and a “name for ourselves.” The Moody Bible Commentary calls this the first example of secularism. They were completely leaving God out of the equation. They were ignoring the Divine Architect and His wisdom. A real Heavenly City, whose architect is God, is the dwelling place of the Most High. Read all about it in Heb. 12:22-24 and Rev. 21:1-3.

The tower of Gen. 11:4 was constructed in rebellion to God by a people who didn’t want or need God. Those people built it to make a name for themselves. They wanted to establish their own identity. Just like today, their fallen desires helped them find their “true selves,” based on their feelings, not on the real Truth found in the Word of God (see also Rom. 1: 21-25).

Compare today’s scripture with Gen. 12:1-3. Who is doing the blessing in these verses? Who receives the blessing? How are the people of Gen. 12:1-3 different from the people of Gen. 11:1-4?

Gen. 11:5 marks the center of this Hebrew poem. Man’s puny efforts of the first four verses are juxtaposed with God’s righteous judgments of the last four verses. Yahweh scattered those willful, self-important people. James Montgomery Boice said, “Those who choose to go their own way will always end up frustrated… because we live in God’s world, not our own.” Regardless of what we are doing, without the blessing of God, our efforts are fruitless and meaningless (Ps. 127:1).

Rebellion and obedience both begin in the heart. Let’s always remember that this is God’s world. We were created for His purposes and His glory. Let’s humble ourselves and bow to Him. Amen

**QUESTIONS**:

1. What purpose did the people (of Gen. 11:1-4) have in their efforts?
2. God gave us brains to use! How do we balance hard work with reliance on God? (Hint: read Prov. 16:9)
3. Some in our society defy God, some pretend there is no God, and some are just apathetic to God. Is there any difference? What can wake them to the Truth?
4. How can we focus on God’s glory and not start building towers for ourselves? (Hint: read Hebrews 12:2)

“Amazing Grace” (Newton)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,

I have already come;

’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,

His Word my hope secures;

He will my Shield and Portion be,

As long as life endures.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise

Than when we’d first begun.