

Lesson 4 – COSMIC GEOGRAPHY

Thus far we've seen a couple of supernatural transgressions. The first was with the serpent in Eden. The second was in Genesis 6, with the fallen sons of God coming to earth, taking wives and producing giant offspring. In both cases, the purpose was to co-opt God's plan of populating the planet with His human family. A new "family" of Nephilim has been introduced in order to subvert God's plan. From this comes a new predicament after the flood. This is a well-known story, but the motives and platers, as well as some of the far-reaching effects are lesser known.

We are now at the Tower of Babel incident. As I said before, this story is well-known but not necessarily well understood.

1 Now the whole earth had one language and 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 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a

city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.” 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called 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.

After the flood, God gave Noah and his family the same dominion mandate he had given Adam and Eve. The purpose was to re-boot God’s original plan in Eden, though Eden was lost. However, as the population grew it became more apparent that another rebellion was underway. The people didn’t want to spread across the land. They decided to remain in the same general area as one large group. This being a relatively short time after the flood, everyone spoke the same language. This whole

scenario troubled the Lord. The people decided to build a great tower. This would “plant their flag” and make them famous, so to speak. They would make their own name for themselves and thereby assert their will above that of the dominion mandate God gave Noah.

How would all this work?

The answer lies in the tower and what it represented. Ancient cities of the ANE and even later in the Americas built towers known as ziggurats.



The ziggurats were man-made mountains and were places where people could meet the gods. The ziggurats were usually part of a temple complex or temple zones.

The point of all this at Babel was diametrically opposed to God's plan. Rather than make the entire world like Eden, the people wanted their own Eden one spot. God wasn't pleased. His response to this rebellion? "Let us go down and confuse their language." Gen. 11:7. God did so and forced their hand. This was brilliant. Why was confusing their language so brilliant?

You don't/ can't get anything done for any length of time with people with whom you can't communicate. Even simple tasks become a chore. Open communication is essential for what we call progress. By confusing the one language and making many languages, God isolated family groups and they had no choice but to separate and thereby spread across the landscape. We can see how this world even today. People groups who remain isolated by language and/ or geography can't trade with other groups and don't exchange ideas. They don't "progress." It is the free exchange of ideas, culture, architecture and science along trade routes that built the West. People groups not involved in this are left behind. (Example: remote people in rain forests, etc.)

What God did in Gen. 11 shows us how the nations in Gen. 10 came to be.



Most of us are familiar with that part. Now for what isn't so well known among us. Genesis 11 isn't the only passage that describes what happened at Babel. Deuteronomy 32: 7-9 describes it this way.

Remember the days of old;

consider the years of many generations;

**^zask your father, and he will show you,
your elders, and they will tell you.**

⁸ When the Most High ^agave to the nations their inheritance,

**when he ^bdivided mankind,
 he fixed the borders¹ of the peoples
 according to the number of the sons of God.²**

**⁹ But the LORD's portion is his people,
 Jacob his allotted heritage.**

Explain: The difference in the texts – sons of God vs. Sons of Israel.

The wording is important. When God divided up the nations at Babel, according to languages, they were divided among the sons of God. God allotted the nations to His council. This is how the Bible explains how/ why the other nations came to worship other gods. Until Babel, God wanted a relationship with all humanity. The Babel debacle changed that. SO God allowed members of His council to govern the other nations. It is after this, in Gen. 12, that a seemingly random guy named Abram is chosen.

With the confusion of languages at Babel, God had judged humanity. Even after the flood the people would not resume God's plan that had begun in Eden. God's response – He would create a new nation. Deuteronomy 32 says this nation is Israel. And that is why God called

Abraham. Genesis 12 is the next chapter in the Tower of Babel story.

God's allotment of the nations to the council and the call of Abraham frames the entire OT, and I would argue much of the NT. How does this frame the old and new testaments? The rest of the OT is about God and His people Israel in conflict with the people and gods of the other nations. Israel begins as a family, then an extended family of clans and tribes which eventually make up a nation. They have the Word of God and while they are among the pagan nations they serve as a living polemic against these nations – a peculiar people with the purpose of drawing the other nations back to YHWH.

This conflict with the nations wasn't God's original intention. The scattering at Babel was a judgement, but God never intended for the other nations to be forsaken forever. We see this in the Abrahamic covenant. In that covenant, God made it clear to Abraham that "all the families on the earth would be blessed through him and his offspring." **Gen. 12:3** (Note the term families.) This shows us that at some point God was planning to bring all the nations back into the fold.

This was evident to the Apostle Paul as he spoke to the pagan philosophers in Athens.

Acts 17:26,27

26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the *boundaries of their dwellings*, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

His ultimate purpose was for the nations to seek after Him. In **Dt. 4:19-20**, God, through Moses had warned His people not to worship the “host of Heaven.” This phrase, “host of heaven” is used elsewhere for the members of the divine council. (**1 Kings 22:19**) What Paul said in Acts 17 makes it clear that God’s purpose was that somehow the nations would still seek His face.

But the Gods who were set over the nations thwarted that plan in two ways. We can see this in Psalm 82: 1-8.

Ps. 82: 1-8

God stands in the congregation of the mighty;

He judges among the gods.

2 How long will you judge unjustly,

And show partiality to the wicked?

Selah

**3 Defend the poor and fatherless;
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.**

**4 Deliver the poor and needy;
Free them from the hand of the wicked.**

**5 They do not know, nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are unstable.**

**6 I said, "You are gods,
And all of you are children of the Most High.**

**7 But you shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes."**

**8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.**

The psalm opens with a council scene where God is judging the gods in His council. In verse 2, God blasts them because they had ruled the nations unjustly, in ways contrary to the character of God. He then goes on to hammer them for two more verses for failing to properly help the pagan nations walking in darkness find their way back to Him. He says they know nothing and that while the people wander in the darkness, the whole world shakes at its very foundations. But sadly, it wasn't only the pagans that wandered in darkness, Israel quickly

followed suit and worshipped the gods not allotted to them.

Deuteronomy 29:26

26 for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them.

Deuteronomy 32:17

**17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
To gods they did not know,
To new gods, new arrivals
That your fathers did not fear.**

They failed to serve YHWH. In Psalm 82, we see that God reacted swiftly and harshly.

Psa. 82:6,7

**¶ I said, "You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
7 nevertheless, like men ^dyou shall die,
and fall like any prince."¹**

The gods would lose their immortality. We know from other passages that this associated with a judgment to come in the end times (**Isa. 34:1-4**) The last verse of the psalm shows that the author is looking forward to the

day when God will finally reclaim the nations. We see this begin in the NT.

The Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

Because of the way Dt. 32 frames the geography of the Bible, we need to understand that the geography of the Bible is cosmic and sometimes sacred. Land is either holy, meaning it is dedicated to God or it is in the domain of some other god. We can see this throughout the entirety of the Bible. The first clue is that pagan gods are often territorial and usually localized. (Explain)

In the book of Daniel we see foreign nations being ruled and represented by divine “princes.”

Daniel 10:13, 20-21

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

20 Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is noted in

the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

When David was running from Saul, he was forced into Philistine territory.

1 Sam. 26:19

¹⁹ Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, °for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in ^pthe heritage of the LORD, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’

David wasn't denying God's power or His omnipresence. But the land of Israel was holy ground. It belonged to YHWH. David had been relegated to land not then belonging to Israel, the domain of another, lesser god.

Another passage we may be familiar (**2 Kings chapter 5**) with has Naaman, a general in the Syrian army seeking the help of the prophet Elisha to heal his leprosy.

Naaman dunked himself in the Jordan river 7 times at the behest of the prophet and was healed. Consequently, he wanted to pay Naaman, something common among the

pagans, but Elisha wouldn't accept payment. Naaman then requested two mule loads of dirt from Israel to take back to Syria. Elisha allowed it and told him to go in peace. Why two loads of dirt? Because it was from Israel, the territory of YHWH, the God he now pledged to worship.

We also see the same concept in the NT. Remember when Jesus told the disciples to shake the dust off their feet when the Gospel wasn't received? That's an allusion to unholy ground. When Jesus was going from Gallilee to Jerusalem, it was common for the pilgrims to skirt Samaria and cross over the east side of the Jordan in order not to walk on what they deemed as unholy ground. Let's look at some of the things Paul says.

Paul used a handful of terms for hostile divine beings, such as: rulers, authorities, powers and thrones. (**Eph. 1:20,21; 3:10;6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15**)

What do all these terms have in common? They were all well-known terms to describe geographical rulership.

Look at how Paul applies this concept of holy ground to a situation within a local church. In **1 Cor. 5: 1-13**,

Paul tells the local church leaders to expel/ exile a man who was living in unrepentant sexual sin. He wrote that they were to deliver the man over to Satan. What did he mean by that? It only makes sense in light of the OT concept of the cosmic geographical worldview. Israel was YHWH's portion – holy ground. God's presence resided in the Tabernacle, which was placed in the middle of the camp as Israel made its way to the Promised Land. Later, when Israel settled in Canaan, they built the Temple and God's presence resided in it. YHWH and his people were home. But now, from the NT, we learn that through the Holy Spirit, God resides in every believer. We, as individuals are the Temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

2 Corinthians 6:16

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

**"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,**

And they shall be My people.”

Also: Romans 8:9

Paul says that this means that believers, the body of Christ, are the new people of God – a new Israel, regardless of nationality or lineage, or any other type of classification.

Gal. 3: 7-9, 26-29

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Getting back to Paul and the unrepentant man – by putting him out of the church, he was leaving holy ground and being put “outside the camp” into unholy ground. That is where sin belongs.

Examples: Herem and Azazel.

Why does all this matter and how does it apply to us?

1. This concept of cosmic geography – the result of God’s judgement at Babel, is the backdrop for Israel’s struggle with the nations in the OT. It is also the backdrop when Jesus arrives on the scene preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and also for Pentecost, as well as the great commission. We have seen in it in the book of Acts. Galatians 3 tells us that the good news, is the fact that anyone who believes in Jesus’ finished work on the cross is a child of God. It is no longer for just one nationality. It works the same way for everyone.
2. It teaches us that this world, as it is now, is not our home. Evil has permeated the globe. Unbelievers are, in a sense, hostages of spiritual forces. They need the gospel of the kingdom to be set free. **And we need to realize that the Gospel is our weapon! Only the faithful declaration of the gospel can**

reverse the evil! The great commission is a spiritual battle plan to take back souls and thereby nations, which means reclaiming sacred space.

- 3.** Every church, every congregation or gathering of true believers is a place we should see as holy ground. External appearances, buildings, bells and whistles, the size of the church, are of no consequence to God. **What matters is that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, He is there also. (Mt. 18:20)** Every believer, every church is on the frontlines of a spiritual war. **We all have the same task and the same weapon – the gospel. Evil will not prevail.**

Going back to Babel – the nations of the world have been judged and disinherited by God. He will start over by carving out for Himself His own portion of land; a beachhead and His own people. We will revisit the concept of cosmic geography when we get to the ministry of Jesus.