**GOD'S JUDGEMENTS AND SOVEREIGNTY**

Genesis 10:1-11:32 (Key Verse: 11:9)

*"* *That is why it is called Babel, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole world, and from that place the LORD scattered them over the face of all the earth.*

In today’s passage we are going to witness how God began to fill the earth after the flood which wiped out the whole earth leaving Noah’s family. Through Noah’s sons God established nations which would fill the earth. However, as sons were born from Noah’s sons, sin entered the world again, filling the people with pride and worldly ambition, as result disobeying God by not scattering and filling earth as God commanded. Through today’s passage were going to learn in detail how the nations disobeyed this command from God and how God responded to this sin of the people. From the key verse we learn that God judged the people through confusing their language. We will therefore learn about the nature of this judgement and the result of his judgement. I pray that God may have mercy on us all today to receive one word and not be like Noah’s descendants but obey God’s command to scatter and fill the earth.

The passage today begins with describing the descendants of Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. After the flood, many sons were born to them, the new generation of humankind. From **verse 2 – 5** we are introduced to the descendants of Japheth, the Japhethites. From **verse 6-20** we are introduced to the descendants of the Hamites, and lastly from **verse 21-31** we are introduced to the descendants of Shem, the Semites. When looking at chapter 10 which describes the descendants of Noah’s sons, one descendant from the line of Ham, the Son of Cush named Nimrod who was called a mighty warrior is described in detail. To learn more about him, let us look at **10:9-10**: “*He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.” 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar.*” Nimrod was called a mighty hunter before the Lord, he built the two great cities of Nineveh and Babylon, which were the super power nations at the time.

He was called a mighty hunter before the Lord, not because he hunted animals, but because he hunted people and made them slaves and was a murderer. Under his leadership people praised him and he became their idol. He disobeyed God’s command and sinned greatly before God. In **Genesis 9:6** it says: ““*Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind*”” Nimrod negatively influenced the nations as well, anyone who became like him was praised and given a nickname: Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord. Being like Nimrod became a thing, and obeying God’s command was disregarded. Life was now all about being great, building great cities, being respected and praised by people. Although God had wiped out the earth which was full of sin through the flood, and established a new generation through the descendants of Noah. Sin began to creep in, through Nimrod who disobeyed God, through the people who became great fans of Nimrod, disregarded God and wanted to be powerful and great like Nimrod.

When looking into chapter 11, we can find out in detail the extent of Nimrod’s influence, the disobedience of the people who idolized Nimrod instead of focusing their attention on God the creator of the heaven and earth. The all-powerful God who wiped out the whole earth and established and new generation of humankind. As chapter 11 begins we are told that the whole earth had one language and common speech, we are also told that the people moved eastward, and they found a plain in Shinar and they settled there. Now in **Genesis** **9:1** it says: “*Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*” God’s command for Noah and his sons, is that they must be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth. However, we are told that the people settled in Shinar, one of the cities that Nimrod build.

Why did the people settle in Shinar? Let us look at **verse 11:3-4**: “*They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.””* They settled in Shinar because they wanted to make a name for themselves, they discovered the technology of backing bricks. In the past they used stone to build, now it was bricks and they were fascinated by this technology. God’s command was very clear that they should scatter over the face of the earth, but they said let us build a tower to make a name for ourselves. They rejected the command of God, the creator of the heavens and the earth and wanted to do what they wanted to do. To make a name for themselves, they wanted to be like God, they wanted to be like Nimrod. When the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, he said your eyes will be opened, you will be like God. And because they wanted to be like God, they rejected the command of God and settled in Shinar, they started building a tower that would reach the heavens.

Today as well, God does not want us to settle, but he wants us to scatter to fill the earth, to multiply in number. As Christian believers we have been called to preach the gospel to all nations. During our Mark study and easter conference we learnt from **Mark 28:19-20** Jesus command which says: “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.””* However, because of the race of technology, career advancements, academics, business, many Christian believers settle like the descendants of Noah’s sons, just like them they say they want to have brilliant careers, excellent academic results, some people say they want to raise good families, they want to enjoy life. They want to make a name for themselves. But from today’s passage we have learnt that this is problematic, it leads us to disobedience. I remember back in the days Sh. Jacob said to me the most powerful tool that Satan uses to take us away from God is by keeping us busy, keeping us busy in our careers, academics, sports and other personal commitments.

Because of pride and ambition without God the descendants of Noah’s sons became so busy building and making a name for themselves and they disobeyed God, they could not live according to the purpose that God intended for them. They lost faith in God and trusted in their own wisdom, their knowledge and power. They wanted to say I made this tower, I am an Engineer, I am good, people respect me. This is not what God wants for us, this is not how God wants to bless us. What God wants for us is to scatter, to go out into the world and make disciples of every nation, to fill the earth. The Korean missionaries, though they were highly educated they obeyed God’s command to fill the earth, to scatter, they left their first world country to be sent into world, to poverty stricken African countries, South America, to corrupt nations across the world, they experienced many difficulties, but God blessed them mightily. Because of their decision of faith and obedience to God’s command our ministry was established, because of their decision of faith Wits UBF could be used mightily to send out our members to NUL UBF to preach the gospel, our Wits members could experience the blessing of scattering into the world, into the mountain kingdom of Lesotho.

What then did God do when the descendants of Noah’s sons disobeyed his command, filling their hearts with pride and worldly ambition? Did God wipe the earth again? God did not wipe out the earth, in **Genesis 9:11** he said: “*I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.””* Unlike us human beings who break our promise, God did not break his promise even though the descendants of Noah’s sons sinned greatly before. How then did God respond to them? How did he respond to the boastful descendants of Noah’s sons who refused to scatter, but wanted to live in one place, live comfortably for themselves, and make a name for themselves? Let us look at **verse 11:5-7**:

*“5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.””*

First God came down to the people, even though they were sinful and underserving to come before God, God came down to them. This showed God’s love for the people, his desire for the people to be restored to him, to have a relationship with him. God is almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth, he could have made a decision from heaven and execute from there, but because of his deep love he came down. We see this very same love when he came down as baby Jesus, born in a manger, the lowliest birth, he lived among us sinners of all kinds, murderers adulterous, prostitutes, liars and many kinds of sinners. Because of love he even gave up his life for us so that we may be saved.

Furthermore, when God came down, he said: “*let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.*” Here God judged the descendants of Noah’s sons by confusing them with their language, when they settled in Shinar they spoke one language and out of worldly pride and ambition they build a tower of Babel and rebelled against God’s command to scatter, to fill the earth. What then happened when God judged them in this way? Let us look at **verse 11:8-9**:

*“8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.”*

God judged the people’s actions because he hates pride, that is the reason Satan was expelled from heaven, God’s desire for us is that we become humble and obey his commands. God blessed us with abilities, skills, abilities to advance in technology and he wants us to do all those things for his glory, he wants us to acknowledge him and the creator of things, when we acknowledge God we are able to grow and experience God’s blessings. Furthermore, God’s judgment was actually a blessing to the people, it was an act of mercy, for after he confused their language, it says the Lord scattered them. After the Lord scattered them, the people were sent out throughout the earth, to fill the earth. After God confused the people’s language, the people began to live according to their purpose. This is indeed the love of God. In **Acts 17:26-27** it says: “*From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.”*

Today as well, we might think God is punishing us or judging us, but in actual fact God is drawing us to his blessings, instead of being angry at God we must gives thanks to God for everything he does, is for our good, we must pray for God’s wisdom to show the work that God is trying to do in our lives through our struggles. It is indeed wonderful news that we have a loving father who goes to even an extent of coming down into this sinful world, to rebuke us, to discipline us with love and draw us to him that we may live according to his purpose and according to his commands.

But this does not mean we must sit back and wait for the Lord to rebuke us and discipline us. As Christian believers we also have a responsibility to make every effort to obey God’s commands, to fill the earth, to scatter, to go out on campus and preach the gospel. I remember back in the days, when we conclude the worship service we used to shout the words: “Bible Africa, World Mission” this was some reminder and encouragement to be sent into other countries as missionaries, and encouragement to preach the gospel and fill the earth with the word of Jesus. How then can we actively make every effort to obey this command from God? As we learnt so far, we must guard ourselves from pride and ambition without God, we must guard ourselves from saying we want to make a name for ourselves. How can we guard ourselves from this? With our own strength, we cannot guard ourselves, we need the help of God. We need to equip ourselves with the knowledge of who God is, have a relationship with him, fully depend on him and trust him. Without a relationship with God, we cannot trust him. Because I have a relationship with my daughter, and she knows I am her father, she is able to fully trust me. In the same way we need to have that relationship with God

The descendants of Noah’s sons united and built the tower of Babel rebelling against God. Just like them we also can unite and rebel against God. How can we overcome this? In **Philippians 2:5** it says: “*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*” As we know, together we make up the body of Christ, so in order to be used greatly by God, we need to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. When need to repent from pushing our own ideas and thoughts in our ministry, but follow Christ Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith.

Furthermore, it is also easy think because we have sinned greatly before God then we cannot be used by God, perhaps we are coming from a family of pagans, worshiping ancestors, and we have some scars from long ago from razor cuts that were used in some rituals. Perhaps because of how we look or communicate we might think that we cannot be used by God, we cannot be scattered by God to fill the earth. This is not true, God is able to use anyone, and God will use anyone, because he is sovereign, all things are in his control, he is the almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth. And this is revealed though Abraham, who came from a family of pagans, his father Terah instead of heading to Canaan as God had commanded him, he settled in Haran and worshipped idols. But this did not stop God’s plan, God in his great wisdom raised Abraham, even though he came from a family of pagans. Next week we will learn that even though his wife Sarai was barren God promised him that he will make him into a great nation. So God can use us regardless, all we need to do is have faith in him, study his word diligently so that we can know him deeply and overcome our pride and worldly ambition.

**Conclusion**

From today’s passage we have learnt once again that our mission and purpose is to scatter and fill the earth, our purpose is to fill the earth by preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. We have learnt that we need to guard ourselves from pride and worldly ambition in order to live out this purpose, for when we do not do so we will rebel against God and disobey his commands. We have also learnt about God’s judgement and sovereignty, for even though the people disobeyed God, God still fulfilled his plan, through his mercy and grace he could judge the descendants of Noah’s sons and scatter them and use them to fill the earth. We have also learnt that God can use anyone to fill the earth, he could use Abram to go to Canaan, even though he came from a family of pagans, a family that disobeyed God and settled in Haran. I pray that God may help us to guard ourselves from pride and worldly ambition, have a relationship with him and have the mindset of Christ Jesus in our relationship with one another and be used mightily fill the earth.