

August 13, 2023
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Brick or Stone?”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our LORD, and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we continue in our sermon series on The Seven C's of the Christian Faith, a sermon series developed to help us build an effectual apology or defense of faith; to really live up to that statement of knowing what we believe and why we believe it. We continue now from Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe to the 4th block-Confusion.

We find confusion in Genesis Chapter 11 where we read, “Now the whole world had one language.” One thing we need to understand here is that Genesis from the time of the flood to Genesis 11 is not written in chronological order. When we look at the previous two chapters, we're dealing with the lineages and the people descending from Noah. And we read that they were separated by their clans and languages in their territories and nations. And so, when we look at those previous two chapters, we know that Chapter 11 was written at least 101 years after the flood of Noah. We see people were still living long lives. Shem was 197 years old at his son's Paleg's birth.

But what else do we read in Genesis 11 we read that as men moved eastward so the sons of Noah multiplied and has a group they began to move eastward. However back in Chapter 9 the flood, after the flood God said to Noah and his family be fruitful increase in number, fill the earth. Well if they're all moving together then they're not really filling the earth. As we continue on in Genesis 11, we read they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. And it is there that they said to each other, now listen carefully, “come let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar.”

They had brick that was made by man versus stone that was made by God. And the bitumen versus mortar. Bitumen is like a type of tar, it

serves like as a glue base shall we say. Whereas mortar is thicker, and is what you use for uneven objects like stone. Yes, mortar can be used for bricks too, but if bricks are made very well, they are a perfect fit, and they don't need much to fit together or stay together. What we see here is a very early form of a spirit of the 666, those numbers we find in Revelation.

I've mentioned before, but I'll just review that Revelation is written in apocalyptic language and numbers have meanings. Six is the number of man, three is the number of God. Six, six, six here is when man replaces God or basically says, we know better than God. And this is the very beginning of that kind of an attitude. I'm not going to use the stone that God gave, we can do better than that. And that fits in nicely unfortunately, with the next verse. Let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens. And let us make a name for ourselves lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

“Wow, now let's think back to the 666, man putting himself before God, saying he knows better. Let's take that little verse apart because there's a couple big problems. First of all we hear the word ourselves a couple of times. They're focused on themselves. And look at the gospel this morning, Jesus very clearly pointed out what the problem with the Pharisees were they were full of themselves. They did everything to their glory and for their purpose. Whereas we are told that we are to do all to the glory of God not to self or man. So, problem one- they're proud they're self-centered. Second, make a tower with its top in the heavens. They are just seeking equality with God, who they saw as living in the heavens. And yet, when we look at Jesus, himself. Jesus did not seek equality with God, even though He is very God, of very God.

The third thing, name. Let us make a name for ourselves. Now we've got the pride clearly labeled. This is very self-serving, no reference to God, self-sufficient no mention of need of God. It is the antithesis of Jesus Himself who said, He came to serve, not to be served. And I want you to think about that. If we're Christians like Christ, we are here to serve. We're here in worship, in the sanctuary to serve God by worshipping Him. And we leave and go into the world, to serve Him by

serving others. The concept of pride and being self-centered and self-sufficient goes all the way back to Genesis.

But as we continue, they're gonna build this tower, into the heavens, make a name for themselves lest...Lest, what? Lest we be dispersed. Now contrast that with what God said at the end of the flood. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. This is a direct statement against what God has said. We don't want to be dispersed; we want to stay together lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. Again, we don't want to fill the earth. We want to be a city, make a name for ourselves, rise to equality with God. We're going to build a tower, to be a symbol of that. What they say is the absolute antithesis of what God had said to them.

Now that tower, as I said, it's a symbol. A symbol of human autonomy. Thinking back to one of our former presidents, you didn't build that. This is what they wanted to say, "we built that!" It's a symbol of mankind's ability to create or make. It is a symbol of man's pride. Look what we did! And it's a symbol of man seeking glory for himself. I did such a good job, you need to praise me. And the result; Genesis 11, verse 5 "the Lord came down." It's kind of like what we read last week where Jesus said, "have you not read?"

The Lord came down is filled with dripping irony. Man was building up, seeking to get higher, and God still had to come down to them. What did He say? "Behold they are one people, they have all one language, this is only beginning of what they will do and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them." They're unified, self-centered attitude, would end up leading to mankind becoming as willfully sinful as before. Through globalization, we are all going to work together on this. I would like you think about that because we do hear a fair amount today about globalization.

We continue on with the book of Genesis we see that willful, sinful, mankind can become so depraved that you get a place like Sodom and Gomorrah we'll touch on that later. So when God sees this, that man is on a path, nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them.

They can become a sinful as they want if they keep down this path. He says, "Let us..." Again, I stop there for a moment. God is not a mental case. No, here's an example of one of those unique things throughout the Old Testament. We read about God, he tells Israel they're one, but when referring to Himself and his work, it's us. It's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Right there, "come let us go down together and there confuse their language so that they may not understand one another's speech.

Which then takes us back to chapter 10. All those clans are listed out in their territories and nations. God's will is done. They will now disperse. By the way, the fact that it is there that we see this change now in humanity into territories, and nations, with individual languages. We might yet even see a little bit of gospel there. Because if you take a look at territories, and nations, and languages, they're all based on race. This is most likely where God created races. And it's a sign of grace, a sign of mercy a sign of love. What a confusion! Everybody there together working on building this tower and suddenly all their languages change. What do you do to find each other? How do you get together? And I have heard it proposed many a time this is when God also changed skin color, changed features; so that they could see my skin is different, like that person's there. Let me go and see if they understand me. It kind of makes sense doesn't it? But that's impossible! So it's a worldwide flood, and so is the creation. We'll leave that one in God's hand. But if that is true, then think about it. Race is a gift from God to keep people together, families together.

So what does this have to do with our apology, or our defense of the Christian faith? Now we continue reading, "therefore its name was called Babel." It's from the Hebrew word babel, which means to confuse or mingle. Babel that's the Hebrew word for the nation, Babylon. Revelation 17, Revelation 18, both speak of Babylon as mankind's ambition to dethrone God and rule the earth. How is this done? By confusing people according to what is true. How was that confusion brought about? By mingling falsehoods together with the truth.

Now think back to the fall, is that not exactly what Satan did? Did God not say you should not eat of any tree in the garden? God had

spoken, that's true. God had spoken about not eating, that was true. But Satan twisted it and brought in a little bit of a falsehood. And look at the catastrophic result that came from that.

That is exactly what we're seeing foretold in revelation of what will happen in the world, that will cause God to come down again in judgment, on judgment day. What can we learn from this? Well like Noah's family, who were told to go into all the world, we also are told to go into all the world. We are told to be humble servants, seeking to serve and not be served, like our leader Jesus Christ. Though He was God, came to serve and not be served. We are told to glorify God in all we do.

When we look at the account, the biblical narrative, God's words to us; Babel tells us stay true. Stay true in your service to God. Stay true to the message found in God's word. Not in the words of men, not in the words of your pastor, not the words of the experts, not in the words of the media or the politicians. Stay true to the message of God's word. **Do Not** mingle man's words man's ambitions, man's ideals, with Gods! No, stay true in service, stay true to the message of God's word, and build on the rock, Jesus Christ Himself. And avoid the many, many, manmade bricks that are a false foundation. Build on the rock, God's church which stands. In our Savior's Name, Amen.