



Genesis 10-11 - The Tower of Babel

I am not sure whether to admit this or not but I am a fan of Steven Seagal movies. Seagal's most famous character is probably Casey Ryback, in *Under Siege* an ex-Navy SEAL who was demoted to a Navy cook after punching out his commanding officer. This provides Seagal with the perfect cover to stalk killer terrorists and whisper, "I'm just a cook," to anyone who will listen.

USS Missouri is heading home on her final voyage just prior to decommissioning when she is invaded a team of heavily armed men led by ex black-ops operative William Stranix. Insubordinate chef Casey Ryback (Steven Seagal) is locked in a freezer after an earlier altercation with the vicious XO (Gary Busey) and is missed during the initial boarding of the ship. He ends up at large but surely stands no chance against superior numbers?

Any Hollywood is based on the struggle between good and evil.

And we see a parallel in Genesis 10-11, actually in all of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. There is a struggle against good and evil. The difference is the reality and seriousness of the story of Genesis.

There's an outbreak of a highly contagious and deadly virus which threatens the whole population of Earth. After starting with one woman and then one man things have gotten much worse.

Even after the flood, the problem has not been contained for the effects of sin are seen continued in Noah's family, until we reach the most blatant assertion so far of human authority – human rebellion. In Genesis 11:1-9.

There's two things we observe in this story: the plans of God and the plans of man.

1. God's plans will happen

WHY Genesis 10? Because of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1.

There are whole nations filling the whole world. God's plan for man to fill the earth is happening. They are filling the earth. Stretching from Crete to Libya in the West to Iran in the east, and from Arabia and Ethiopia in the south to Asia Minor and Armenia in the north.

Also notice that man is unified and one while at the same time diverse. There are 70 names suggesting that this represents "all the nations of the world." Every nation and person owes their existence to God and are under God. It doesn't matter how diverse all the nations or people are their cultural. Social or religious differences they belong to a shared humanity. They belong to one world designed and created by God.

Reading genealogies like Genesis 10 may seem to us like reading the yellow pages but these are people are wonderful and fearfully made and known by God. People who all play a part big small in the purposes of God.

We must recognise our dependence on God. Know he is in control and knows best for us.

As we seen in the last weeks we see here again that where there is God's grace there is sin. Where there is blessing there is judgment.

In the middle of the events of man multiplying there are the events of Genesis 11.

2. Man's plans will not happen

Read Genesis 11:1-2

How can they have one language? Remember 10:20. But also do you remember Peleg in Genesis 10:25 The genealogy of chapter 10 goes past the events of Gen 11. In the middle of Genesis 10 is a reference to the events of Gen 11.

So they have one language. What else?

They moved eastward. This may seem just like a geographical note but it is theological as well. See Genesis 1:24 and 4:16. Travelling east of Eden was the judgment on Adam and Cain. It is an indicator that man is moving further away from God.

What happens? See Genesis 3:3-4

There's some human ingenuity. But the thing to take notice of is that people are working together. They say LET US.

What are they planning to do together? Build a city. Is there anything wrong with building a city? Is there anything wrong with cities? Well no God is building a city and all of history we are told in Revelation will end in a city.

Again as we seen before we must look deeper than their actions to find out what is really going on.

Did you notice the intentions or motive for building a city and a tower?

There are two in Genesis 11:4

1. So that we may make a name for ourselves.
2. So that they won't be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

Let's think about that one first. There is a direct rejection of God's command to fill the earth. To scatter we've seen earlier. God wanted worship and praise of him to ring out across the whole world.

These people say no.

Christians have been doing the same thing ever since. We refuse to see our gathered times and times of building up to send us out. To scatter into the world to let the praise of God ring out across the world. We fail to move out. We build our 4 walls around our families. We build our 4 walls around our church. We make it safe and comfortable for us forgetting whether it is welcoming and comfortable for those who should come along.

Don't just hang out or spend time with your family or even just your church friends without being part of those who are outside those groups.

Let's go back to the first one - making a name for themselves. Doing this for their own glory. Seeking world renown. This is pride. Self advancement. Doing things for personal recognition. Getting identity from something else other than God. Their significance. Their satisfaction.

It is not a matter of whether you are proud it is what where do you seek recognition and what for? This is wrong because it is seeking your identity in something that only Jesus can give you. It is seeking satisfaction in something only Jesus can give you.

It is obvious that great people do this. I could give you plenty of examples. But no doubt you and I don't consider ourselves great for any reason so what we do is inflate who we are.

Either in our work, ministry or with our kids. Even in our church or Christian life. We can be more proud of religious efforts or even our morality above who we are in Jesus and because of Jesus.

Is that you?

How would you know if it is? We feel it when we don't get recognition in one of these areas or others. Even when you say you are not like that you making the statement of a proud person.

What is God's response to man's pride?

Read Genesis 11:5-9

God confuses their languages and creates disunity. Without a common language there is no way of communication. So it is impossible for men to cooperate to build or socialise. Towers cannot be built or communities live together unless people can understand each other. They cannot keep working together on their anti God projects.

This seems a little confusing. Isn't unity a good thing? Well it depends on what the unity is being used for. What they did to work against in not scattering God brings about in his way.

How is this action of God both judgment and grace?

There are things that are tragic but not as bad as facing the consequences of rejecting God. God saves these people from themselves. He stops them from continue to push him further and further out of their lives.

We've seen that God's plan will happen and man's will not. The last point is again God's plan will happen because there is an important event that happens later in history which reverses the events of Babel.

3. God's plans will happen

Read Acts 2:1-13

Here we have a reversal of the events of Genesis 11. God confused languages in Genesis 11. Here people of different languages gather. Peter speaks about Jesus. All these people hear in own language. It is the reversal of Babylon.

The disciples were united not in doing their own thing their own way, not in making a name for themselves. But they are united in preaching the Gospel of Jesus. The true basis for unity. Unity with God in making the name of Jesus great in the world. For the fame of Jesus not themselves.

The longing of the people of Babel is only satisfied in Jesus. Our problem is the sin problem. Only Jesus can solve our sin problem Needing satisfaction. Needing identity. It is only found as we come into the city of God. The Kingdom of Jesus.

The shift away from God and his purpose as the centre to becoming inward looking is often slow and subtle. But it is real and it means as God's people we don't do what God has brought us to do. We forget that church is not just a place to go to but to go from. We fail to fill the earth and subdue it through making Jesus known. Instead of going to those God has placed in our lives as missionaries we stay at home and focus on buildings comfortable houses and churches, careers, families and moral religious lives. We become more worked up about what goes on at church that what is happening outside church.

We are asking for judgment from God who would drive us out so as to restore us to a true unity of making Jesus known in our world.

Never forget in the book of Acts persecution was the way drove the early Christians out of their comfortable life into all the world.