

Lesson 5

All Nations and Babel

Sabbath Afternoon, April 23

Some of the descendants of Noah soon began to apostatize. A portion followed the example of Noah and obeyed God's commandments; others were unbelieving and rebellious, and even these did not believe alike in regard to the Flood. Some disbelieved in the existence of God, and in their own minds accounted for the Flood from natural causes. Others believed that God existed and that He destroyed the antediluvian race by a flood; and their feelings, like Cain's, rose in rebellion against God because He destroyed the people from the earth and cursed the earth the third time by a flood.

Those who were enemies of God felt daily reproved by the righteous conversation and godly lives of those who loved, obeyed, and exalted God. The unbelieving consulted among themselves and agreed to separate from the faithful, whose righteous lives were a continual restraint upon their wicked course. They journeyed a distance from them and selected a large plain wherein to dwell. They built them a city, and then conceived the idea of building a large tower to reach unto the clouds, that they might dwell together in the city and tower, and be no more scattered.

—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 72.

All human ambition, all boasting, is to be laid in the dust. Self, sinful self, is to be abased, not exalted. By holiness in the daily life we are to reveal Christ to those around us. Corrupt human nature is to be subdued, not exalted. Thus only can we become pure and undefiled. We are to be humble, faithful men and women. . . .

. . . A faithful record is kept of all the acts of the children of men. Nothing can be concealed from the eye of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity. Some make Christ ashamed of them by their devising and planning and scheming. God does not approve of their conduct, for the Lord Jesus is dishonored by their spirit and their works. . . .

The instruction that the Lord has given concerning His work points out the right way. God's plans and God's thoughts are as much higher than man's plans and man's thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. God's voice is to be heard, His wisdom is to guide. He has outlined His plan in His word and in the testimonies that He has sent to His people. That work only which is carried on in accordance with the principles of His word will stand fast forever.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 234, 235.

With untold love our God has loved us, and our love awakens toward Him as we comprehend something of the length and breadth and depth and height of this love that passeth knowledge. By the revelation of the attractive loveliness of Christ, by the knowledge of His love expressed to us while we were yet sinners, the stubborn heart is melted and subdued, and the sinner is transformed and becomes a child of heaven. God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith.

—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76, 77.

Sunday, April 24: The Curse of Ham

To repopulate the desolate earth, which the Flood had so lately swept from its moral corruption, God had preserved but one family, the household of Noah, to whom He had declared, "Thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." Genesis 7:1. Yet in the three sons of Noah was speedily developed the same great distinction seen in the world before the Flood. In Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who were to be the founders of the human race, was foreshadowed the character of their posterity.

Noah, speaking by divine inspiration, foretold the history of the three great races to spring from these fathers of mankind. Tracing the descendants of Ham, through the son rather than the father, he declared, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The unnatural crime of Ham declared that filial reverence had long before been cast from his soul, and it revealed the impiety and vileness of his character. These evil characteristics were perpetuated in Canaan and his posterity, whose continued guilt called upon them the judgments of God. . . .

The prophecy of Noah was no arbitrary denunciation of wrath or declaration of favor. It did not fix the character and destiny of his sons. But it showed what would be the result of the course of life they had severally chosen and the character they had developed. It was an expression of God's purpose toward them and their posterity in view of their own character and conduct. As a rule, children inherit the dispositions and tendencies of their parents, and imitate their example; so that the sins of the parents are practiced by the children from generation to generation. Thus the vileness and irreverence of Ham were reproduced in his posterity, bringing a curse upon them for many generations. "One sinner destroyeth much good." Ecclesiastes 9:18.

On the other hand, how richly rewarded was Shem's respect for his father; and what an illustrious line of holy men appears in his posterity! "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright," "and his seed is blessed." Psalm 37:18, 26.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 117, 118.

Repentance, as well as forgiveness, is the gift of God through Christ. It is through the influence of the Holy Spirit that we are convicted of sin, and feel our need of pardon. None but the contrite are forgiven; but it is the grace of God that makes the heart penitent. He is acquainted with all our weaknesses and infirmities, and He will help us.

Some who come to God by repentance and confession, and even believe that their sins are forgiven, still fail of claiming, as they should, the promises of God. They do not see that Jesus is an ever-present Saviour; and they are not ready to commit the keeping of their souls to Him, relying upon Him to perfect the work of grace begun in their hearts. . . . There are no victories in this kind of faith. Such persons toil to no purpose; their souls are in continual bondage, and they find no rest until their burdens are laid at the feet of Jesus.

—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 353.

Monday, April 25: The Genesis Genealogy

When consideration is given to man's opportunities for research; how brief his life; how limited his sphere of action; how restricted his vision; how frequent and how great the errors in his conclusions, especially as concerns the events thought to antedate Bible history; how often the supposed deductions of science are revised or cast aside; with what readiness the assumed period of the earth's development is from time to time increased or diminished by millions of years; and how the theories advanced by different scientists conflict with one another,— considering all this, shall we, for the privilege of tracing our descent from germs and mollusks and apes, consent to cast away that statement of Holy Writ, so grand in its simplicity, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him"? Genesis 1:27. Shall we reject that genealogical record,—prouder than any treasured in the courts of kings,—"which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God"? Luke 3:38.

Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God.

—*Education*, p. 130.

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.

In words of matchless beauty and tenderness, the apostle Paul set before the sages of Athens the divine purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations. "God that made the world and all things therein," declared the apostle, "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." Acts 17:24-27.

—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 499, 500.

The Bible presents a boundless field for the imagination, as much higher and more ennobling in character than the superficial creations of the unsanctified intellect as the heavens are higher than the earth. The inspired history of our race is placed in the hands of every individual. All may now begin their research. They may become acquainted with our first parents as they stood in Eden, in holy innocency, enjoying communion with God and sinless angels. They may trace the introduction of sin and its results upon the race, and follow, step by step, down the track of sacred history, as it records the disobedience and impenitence of man and the just retribution for sin.

—*Messages to Young People*, p. 255.

Tuesday, April 26: One Language

No sooner was the earth repopled than men resumed their hostility to God and heaven. They transmitted their enmity to their posterity, as though the art and device of misleading men, and causing them to continue the unnatural warfare, was a sacred legacy.

This confederacy was born of rebellion against God. The dwellers on the plain of Shinar established their kingdom for self-exaltation, not for the glory of God. Had they succeeded, a mighty power would have borne sway, banishing righteousness, and inaugurating a new religion. The world would have been demoralized. The mixture of religious ideas with erroneous theories would have resulted in closing the door to peace, happiness, and security. These suppositions, erroneous theories, carried out and perfected, would have directed minds from allegiance to the divine statutes, and the law of Jehovah would have been ignored and forgotten. Determined men, inspired and urged on by the first great rebel, would have resisted any interference with their plans or their evil course. In the place of the divine precepts they would have substituted laws framed in accordance with the desires of their selfish hearts, in order that they might carry out their purposes.

—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1091, 1092.

[The enemies of God] reasoned that they would secure themselves in case of another flood, for they would build their tower to a much greater height than the waters prevailed in the time of the Flood, and all the world would honor them, and they would be as gods and rule over the people. This tower was calculated to exalt its builders, and was designed to turn the attention of others who should live upon the earth from God to join with them in their idolatry. Before the work of building was accomplished, people dwelt in the tower. Rooms were splendidly furnished, decorated, and devoted to their idols. Those who did not believe in God imagined if their tower could reach unto the clouds, they would be able to discover reasons for the Flood.

—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 72, 73.

In the Word of God are represented two contending parties that influence and control human agencies in our world. Constantly these parties are working with every human being. Those who are under God's control and who are influenced by the heavenly angels, will be able to discern the crafty workings of the unseen powers of darkness. Those who desire to be in harmony with the heavenly agencies should be intensely in earnest to do God's will. They must give no place whatever to Satan and his angels.

But unless we are constantly on guard, we shall be overcome by the enemy. Although a solemn revelation of God's will concerning us has been revealed to all, yet a knowledge of His will does not set aside the necessity of offering earnest supplications to Him for help, and of diligently seeking to cooperate with Him in answering the prayers offered. He accomplishes His purposes through human instrumentalities.

—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

Wednesday, April 27: “Let Us Go Down”

[Christ] came to this world in human form, to live a man amongst men. He assumed the liabilities of human nature, to be proved and tried. In His humanity He was a partaker of the divine nature. In His incarnation He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God. . . . While the Son of a human being, He became the Son of God in a new sense. Thus He stood in our world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.

Christ came in human form to show the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds and of the fallen world that ample provision has been made to enable human beings to live in loyalty to their Creator. He endured the temptations that Satan was permitted to bring against Him, and resisted all his assaults. He was sorely afflicted, and hard beset, but God did not leave Him without recognition. When He was baptized of John in Jordan, as He came up out of the water, the Spirit of God, like a dove of burnished gold, descended upon Him, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

—*Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 226, 227.*

God sees the sinner. . . . David was a repentant man, and although he confessed and hated his sin, he could not forget it.

He exclaimed, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me. . . . Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day” [Psalm 139:7-12].

God is everywhere. He sees, He knows, all things, and understands the intents and purposes of the heart. It is in vain that an attempt should be made to conceal sin from His notice. He saw our first parents in Eden. He saw Cain when he raised his hand to kill Abel. He saw the sins of the inhabitants of the old world, and numbered their days and punished them with a flood. He saw the sins of His own covenant people, the Jews, when they plotted against the life of the Son of God.

—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce, p. 89.*

There are tower builders in our time. Infidels construct their theories from the supposed deductions of science, and reject the revealed word of God. . . . In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. . . .

The time of God’s investigation is at hand. The Most High will come down to see that which the children of men have builded. His sovereign power will be revealed; the works of human pride will be laid low.

—*Conflict and Courage, p. 42.*

Thursday, April 28: The Redemption of the Exile

[The enemies of God] exalted themselves against God. But He would not permit them to complete their work. They had built their tower to a lofty height when the Lord sent two angels to confound them in their work. Men had been appointed for the purpose of receiving word from the workmen at the top of the tower, calling for material for their work, which the first would communicate to the second, and he to the third, until the word reached those on the ground. As the word was passing from one to another in its descent, the angels confounded their language, and when the word reached the workmen upon the ground, material was called for which had not been required. And after the laborious process of getting the material to the workmen at the top of the tower, it was not that which they wished for. Disappointed and enraged, they reproached those whom they supposed were at fault.

After this there was no harmony in their work. Angry with one another, and unable to account for the misunderstanding and strange words among them, they left the work and separated from each other and scattered abroad in [the] earth. Up to this time men had spoken but one language. Lightning from heaven, as a token of God's wrath, broke off the top of their tower, casting it to the ground. Thus God would show to rebellious man that He is supreme.

—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 73.

In mercy [God] confounded their speech, thus putting a check on their purposes of rebellion. God bears long with the perversity of men, giving them ample opportunity for repentance; but He marks all their devices to resist the authority of His just and holy law. From time to time the unseen hand that holds the scepter of government is stretched out to restrain iniquity. Unmistakable evidence is given that the Creator of the universe, the One infinite in wisdom and love and truth, is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, and that none can with impunity defy His power.

The schemes of the Babel builders ended in shame and defeat. The monument to their pride became the memorial of their folly. Yet men are continually pursuing the same course—depending upon self, and rejecting God's law. It is the principle that Satan tried to carry out in heaven; the same that governed Cain in presenting his offering.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 123.

[God] is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free.

—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 369, 370.

Friday, April 29: For Further Reading

The Ministry of Healing, “God’s Plans the Best,” pp. 473, 474;

Patriarchs and Prophets, “The Tower of Babel,” pp. 117–124.