

Free - Take One

Shaqah



*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
Colossians 2:8*

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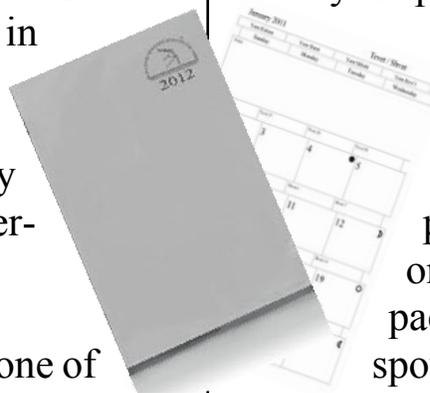
November & December 2011

Step Into the Springs!

Here at Living Springs Institute, we publish a daily planning calendar which will give you the Biblical calendar alongside the Gregorian calendar we are all familiar with. This planner is a Biblical education as well as useful in organizing a person's daily life. We think this is an exciting teaching product; and by the grace of God, we are offering these for FREE!

If you have not already got one of these calendars and/or if you would like some to give to others, just let us know. To order free copies of the 2012 planning calendar, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org and click on the "Resource Shop" button. The calendar is right at the top of the form, and you can type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. If you are using e-mail, send your request to: resources@shaqah.com. If you're us-

ing regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2012 calendar; be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and it will be on its way!



One note I would like to make is, it does save us on postage to send more than one calendar in the same package. So, if you and your spouse and/or a friend would each like one, or you know of others you would like to give one to, please don't hesitate to order one for each person all at once. Now, if you are a regular mail subscriber to this publication, you should have received one of these calendars with this issue of *Shaqah*; but you may still want others, to share. Please don't hesitate to order more. We would also like to send calendars to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don't necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Due to this, we do not

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automatically send calendars to our e-mail subscribers, so be sure to order one today!

Of course, for those of you who have access to a computer and the internet, we want to remind you that we produce a PDF version of this calendar, which you can download from our website if you like. This is a very printer friendly version of the calendar, giving individuals the chance to print out their own calendar(s). In doing this, you can play with the size the calendar is printed, put it in the folder or binder of your choosing, use just the pages you want, etc. We have even went the extra step of making the previous years of the calendar available for study and reference purposes. All the information about what the PDF calendar is, more tips on how to use it, and even the ability to share your own useful tips about how to make it what you want, can be accessed by visiting the Calendar Project page of our website! You can find the link by visiting www.livingspringsinstitute.org, clicking on Learning Center, then Calendar Project.

Another part of this project is the companion book which goes along with the calendar and which will contain a significant amount of teaching, allowing you to go deeper in your understanding of the calendar God gave to His chosen nation. This companion book has yet to be published, and again this year, I apologize for this. It has been a very busy year in which we have accomplished a lot for the few hands we have doing the work of this

ministry. However, the calendar companion book was not one of the things we got done. We will continue to do our best at moving forward with all the work we have; and Lord willing, the companion book will be coming along soon!

I want to make it clear that when you order from Living Springs, giving us your name, mailing address, or e-mail, will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs Inc. does not share your personal information with any other organization(s), and you will not receive constant mailings from us. We are happy to send people only what they request. By the mighty hand of The Lord, we are continuing to offer this calendar, as well as the other teaching products we offer, for free. Thus, if you would like to have one, don't forget to request your free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), when you write! If you would like extra copies or back issues of *Shaqah*; our free book - *A Sabbath By Design*; or anything we offer, please let us know. If you are using our online order form, and the form will not allow you to order the quantity you need, please make your request for extra copies in the comment box at the end of the order form.

In closing, I just want to say thank you again to all those who have taken part in this ministry! Please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others. God bless; and as always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Our last issue contained a chart which covered all of the names in Genesis chapter 10, and that chart will continue to be a good reference for issues to come. This is because in our verse by verse look, we ended last time by discussing the families of Japheth, which technically only took us to Genesis chapter 10 verse 5. As we touched on last time, it's important to realize that the verses here in chapter 10 are really not as much a genealogy, as is Genesis chapter 5, but a story which is about the path man chose to take post-flood. More is covered here in chapter 10 than just the genealogy which leads us up to the Tower of Babel story. This is because the tower story is not just about an individual such as Noah who was called by God to accomplish a specific task among men. The tower story is about what man chose to do as a group. Thus, the story given in chapter 11 has to do with the population of the entire planet at the time. This population, as well as their choices, had to have time to be made and develop before something such as the tower could take place.

Now, it's also important to understand that the path which leads up to the Tower of Babel was not a path taken because of a determination which was made among the sons of Noah upon leaving the ark, and then aimed for by all the families which came from them, until it was brought to pass. However, the path did develop on the basis of core desires and principles which man had, even before the flood, and which he refused to see for the wrong it was and is. In

spite of the flood, man had pretty much come to see these principles as the only way to live. This shows us that while God may have wiped the world clean and given man a new chance to start all over again, man himself had certainly survived the flood. It shows us how much the flood was an interaction on God's part, not God changing or taking away man's free will. All on his own and in spite of the flood, man held onto failed principles which he would continue to insist on! One of the big differences we see on this side of the flood is that God has already allowed man to see that trusting in his own thoughts would take him to utter destruction. By sending the flood in conjunction with a way to be saved from that flood, God gave man a second chance. Now, God will protect that second chance for individuals in future generations without mankind as a whole having to go through a flood-like destruction cycle time and time again!

Another important point is that I say man took failed principles to the other side of the flood not because the three sons of Noah necessarily taught ways of living to their children which they knew before the flood, but because man, in general, continued to lean on his base nature instead of looking to God for his guidance. This is what has led to a world today which does not understand how to live without centralized government and a monetary system. The only people who do, are those who believe we should have a world ruled by what those who can

see no other way, believe we will fall into without human government. Most people believe money and government are the basis of civilization and without them we will have nothing but “anarchy”! Now, the strict definition of the word “anarchy” simply means, “The absence of any form of political authority”; and “authority” is the key word here. Man sees no way to live without an authority; and in truth that is not, nor has it been, the problem. There must be an authority which can judge between right and wrong, and which can determine what is right and wrong in the first place. Thus, the question is not, can we live without authority? it's about who that authority should be!

As we have talked about, Noah was not a man who chose to or attempted to rule the world. However, he did believe in The One Who should rule the world, and he continued to serve God! After the flood, man was not, as some people suggest, simply left to follow his conscious. In truth, man was left with the same choice he had in the very beginning. Call upon the name of The Lord and make God the ultimate authority in this world, or go at it on our own. Going at it on our own is where we find there to be a very big problem with the authority issue. Without God, we find there to be some very differing opinions among men about what is right and wrong or, at the very least, what is acceptable and unacceptable. This is why even concepts of human government, such as democracy, are eventually doomed to fail.

Without a perfect leader to rule the world, democracy may stand about the best chance of working in many cases because, at the very least, it gives some of the political authority to all individuals involved. This

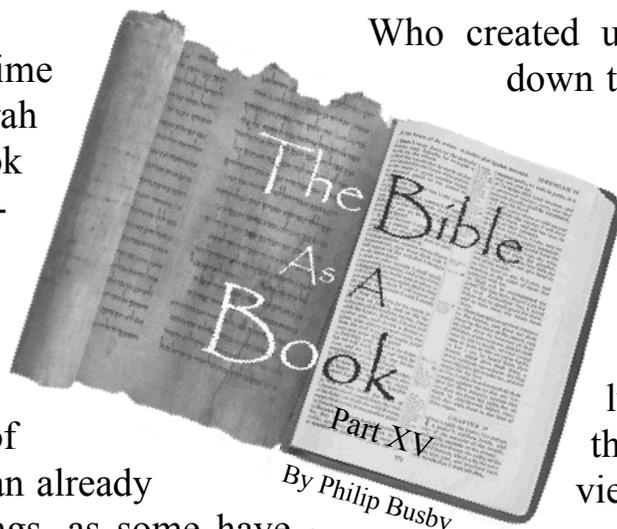
gives a chance to see freedom for individuals as people live their lives through cooperation. However, even the definition of “cooperate” is, “To work together toward a common end or purpose.” When we talk about cooperation being an answer to the needs of greater society, we cannot talk about cooperation from the standpoint that we must find an all encompassing end or purpose for all to work together toward! The fact people take on this attitude is exactly why, even concepts such as democracy end up failing to preserve freedom for the individual any more than other forms of government. Often times, the majority simply uses its power to rule over the minority. Cooperation is only a key to surviving in group forms if the groups themselves are formed through cooperation. When it comes to a more universal concept, we must all agree to use the world's space to literally stay out of each other's way when compatibility between ideas can not be found. Now, space may be a problem in today's world, but it was not for centuries after the flood!

Prior to the flood, we see people failing to use the space of this planet to continue a system of separation between those who served God and those who refused to serve God. In fact, this was a very big reason for the flood's necessity. After the flood, people certainly did not have a space issue. However, in spite of this fact, not only did they not separate from one another as different ones chose varying, and at times, incompatible paths, there was another element which came into play. That element is force. Before the flood there is no mention of force becoming a very widespread problem; but after the flood, force becomes a big issue

FBS continued on pg. 13

We ended last time still discussing the Torah and specifically the book of Genesis. In that conversation, we came down to talking about the fact there is no evidence Moses simply wrote the book of Genesis by congealing an already existing group of writings, as some have suggested. God was giving His Word among men. He was entrusting and committing His very oracles to a specific people. (Rom. 3:1-2) The Word is no accident, and nowhere is this more evident than when talking about the first five books of the Bible which are the Law God gave to Israel. All five of these books were given to Moses directly from God; and perhaps it's helpful to think about the fact, the Bible, as a book, consisted of just these five books at the beginning of its existence!

Now, we covered the fact Genesis is a solid history, in that it covers the time from creation all the way down to the circumstances which are the heart of where the book of Exodus begins. Thus, Genesis covers a significant time period, not just in Israel's history but in human events; and it proves to us that God was truly committing His oracles to a nation of people, not just developing a nation of people for whom these written words would exclusively be for! This has a lot to do with why the Torah is divided into five different books. Genesis tells us the story of how we all came into being, the way we fell away from The God



Who created us, and why God came down to the choice of developing a specific nation to directly work through. With that, we will begin an overview of the book of Genesis which will likely be longer than most of the other books' overviews.

Genesis tells us, before God created the universe there simply was nothing which we understand. People deny this because they have a hard time wrapping their head around the idea there is anything outside that which we can view with our eyes and touch with our hands. However, it makes no sense to try and explain the existence of everything you see by looking at what you can see. That which you can see only exists because God put it into place and organized it into a working system. Trying to deny God's existence by trying to explain how you and I might have come to be without Him, raises more questions than it answers. In the very beginning of it all was God. Only He could and did put in place the environment in which we need to live, and life itself!

The creation account tells us that God created one human - a male. From him, God creates one more - a female. God gives them simple instructions, including the fact they were not to eat of one specific tree which would grant them the knowledge of good and evil. God had placed this tree along with the one which would grant hu-

mans indefinite physical life, in a garden He specifically prepared for mankind. After telling us this, the Book of Genesis moves directly to the story of what those first two humans did with the instructions God gave. We see in that story the introduction of a being we later know generally as the devil, and by more proper name, Satan. It's not until later that we find much information about this being, and exactly what he is all about. However, the story of the day Eve met Satan in the Garden of Eden shows us he is here among us, and he is here to be an advocate for those things which are rebellious against God's instructions. God never desired to create programmed humans who serve Him only because that is all they know. Satan causes us to deal with many issues, and it gives us the chance to make right choices, not just because we've never considered anything else, but because we know the reasons why. This is not to hail the devil in any way as something great, but to understand why God allows the devil to exist and interact with us. (Rom. 8:28)

In the story where Satan comes to Eve in the garden, we see clearly he has no power to force Eve to do anything she does not want to. He even comes to her in the form of an animal. Satan would love to control us, and there are ways people can and do give their lives over to him at times. However, what we see in the garden is more of his primary ability. Satan gets Eve to question what God had told them about that one tree they should not eat from. Eve should have turned to God for the answers to the questions her conversation with the devil brought up. It was entirely her choice to allow that conversation to bring her to a place where she felt she had an excuse to

disobey God! Once Adam and Eve took of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they immediately proved they could not handle it, and began to make bad choices. Because of this, they were driven from the Garden of Eden. They could no longer be allowed to take of the tree whose fruit was able to sustain their physical forms indefinitely. (Gen. 3:22-24) It's God's mercy that we not live in a sinful state forever, but instead that we have a chance to be redeemed!

As God puts man out of the garden, He sacrifices the lives of animals to provide for them the basic coverings for their physical bodies which they were unable to make for themselves. God also placed a curse upon the serpent which is the animal form Satan used to appear to Eve. This would remind humans of the mistake they had made. God also tells Eve she will have pain in childbirth, and this is because she has not given her children something good by disobeying God. She would now see her children suffer the consequences of bad choices such as the one she had made. God would also curse the ground, so man could be shown many things by the fact he would now have to work in order to have anything in life. This physical world would not be the provider it had been. Man needed to understand this world is not worth seeking above the ways of God!

Adam and Eve would go out into the world and begin a family. They would have two sons named Cain and Abel. Their story would not include Satan, but would show a bit of why Satan is allowed to exist, in that Abel would love God in truth and Cain would only love God for what he could get. One day as the two came to worship God by

bringing the fruits of their labor, Abel's offering would have specific meaning and thus receive more attention than Cain's. Instead of learning the ways of God, this would anger Cain. Even after God tried to reason with Cain directly, Cain, in his anger, would kill his brother. When God confronts Cain about the murder, Cain is only worried about himself and what kind of life he would have from then on. Because of God's grace, God would allow Cain to live, and make his choices in life. Cain would choose to go out from the presence of God and no longer seek God. Cain would attempt to build a life with what this world might offer; and in doing so, he initiates the idea of people being kept together to accomplish the things of this world, by building a city.

Cain's family would grow, and from among his family there would grow those who had various technical skills. However, there would also come practices such as the marrying of more than one wife. (Gen. 4:19) There would be another killing in which God would not be consulted at all as to what the punishment should be. Aside from all which Cain's family was doing, Adam and Eve would have another son named Seth. This son would have a son named Enos, and he would set the precedence for men to once again turn and begin to call upon the name of The Lord. From there, the human population would expand in two separate groups. Those who believed and called upon the name of The God Who created us all, and those who lived without care for the things of God. Among those who served God, there was a man named

Enoch who walked so closely with God that before he had lived out his natural life span on this earth, God simply took Him. Proving to us all, there is more to seek than just this life! (Gen. 5:21-24, Phili. 1:21) Among those who did not serve God there would develop quite the opposite. Very wicked men would arise who oppressed people with their wickedness. In spite of all this great wickedness, in time, the people who served God would begin to intermarry with those who did not. The lines would become blurred between the groups, and eventually there would no longer be two distinct groups. In this situation, there would only be left distinct men of God who stood out from the general population as men of renown for their righteousness. (Gen. 6:4)

Because man turned his back on The God of creation more and more, the world became so corrupt that God determined there was no way He could continue to allow man to live generation after generation in this state. At that time, God found on the earth one righteous man named Noah. (Gen. 6:1-8) God told Noah He was going to destroy the world with a flood, and Noah was to build an ark of safety in which those who would listen to God's warning could be saved, along with enough animals and food to repopulate the earth. In the end, only eight people, consisting of Noah, his wife, his three sons, (Ham, Shem, and Japheth) and their wives, boarded the ark. Only those eight people would survive the flood and begin anew!

After the flood, there would never again be a separation between those who served

God and those who rejected Him, as there had been before. The world would be all of one language, and eventually there would arise not just the idea of building a city, but a kingdom which could rule all men. This would be headed by Ham's grandson, named Nimrod. Instead of heeding the curse of the ground which had been further emphasized by the destruction of the flood, in that man was not to look to what he could build in the here and now, the general population would fear that man would spread out across the planet and not work as one unit toward whatever man could accomplish in this world. The families would travel to the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, into what we call the Mesopotamian valley. There they would decide to build a religion whose focal point would be to control man's future. For this purpose, they would build a central structure where all men were to come and worship. There, they would not worship God, they would worship the creation. (Gen. 11:1-9, Rom. 1:18-23)

As God came down to interact with man as He had always done, this tower stood as an ultimate rejection of God's presence in this world. This, of course, would bring ultimate worthlessness to man's existence. Therefore, God determined that before mankind could be totally corrupted by these thoughts and sinful desires, God would confound the languages of men so they would separate from one another. This would give individuals who desired a walk with The One True God a chance to do so, instead of being enveloped by one false religion which attempted to block God out of every man's life!

After this, the people of the world separated out across the planet in three main directions and along the family lines of the three sons which came with Noah on the ark. Ham's family would go to the west and south of the valley. Japheth's family would go to the west and north of the valley, and Shem's family would stay in the valley and migrate to the east of it. Almost a century after the Tower of Babel, there was born a man named Terah who was of the family of Shem and who lived in the Mesopotamian valley. God would begin to use his family to ensure God's ways were never lost in this world of sinfulness. Thus, Terah took his son named Abram and his grandson Lot, whose father had died, to go west, out into a place they did not know, among the other families of the earth.

They traveled to a place not far from the Mediterranean Sea which brought them to a crossroad of sorts between going among the families of Ham to the south or the families of Japheth to the north. It is in this place that Terah dies. However, God had already spoke to Abram that he was to go out of his father's house, among the families of Ham to the south, and there God would work with Abram and use his life for God's purposes. Taking his nephew Lot and their respective families, Abram obeyed God and went into what is modern day Israel. Once there, God promised Abram that this land would someday belong to his seed, and not to the families of Ham who currently held it. (Gen. 11:31-12:8) God had brought Abram from among family ties which could have obligated him to follow the wrong path in life, and even kept him from becoming a distinct people. In doing so, God placed Abram among those whom

he had no reason to emulate or be obligated to. Abram's life and the life of the family he would give birth to would build something special and separate from this world's general population!

Due to famine in the land, Abram would travel as far south as Egypt, where he would have an encounter with the great power of Pharaoh. Abram feared the beauty of his wife Sarai would cause him harm; thus, Abram told Pharaoh Sarai was his sister, which was not a total lie. (Gen. 20:11-12) However, Abram neglected to mention she was also his wife! Pharaoh would attempt to take Sarai, but would be plagued by God for doing so. Pharaoh would recognize the signs, and in anger returned Sarai to Abram. He would also command Abram be sent out of Egypt. This incident insured Abram did not stay in Egypt; and thus, Abram and Lot returned to the promised land, even to the place where Abram first built an altar unto God in the land.

In time, Abram and Lot would find they were both so wealthy that the land where they lived could no longer sustain them both. Abram told Lot to choose what he wanted of the land so they could separate. Lot chose the fertile valley along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. This left Abram in the less lucrative hill country. However, Lot had chosen to live among the land's most sinful inhabitants, while Abram lived a peaceful life communing with God. (Gen. 13:11-18)

In the course of time, we see the incursion of the kingdom and eventual empire idea which would re-arise from the Meso-

potamian valley where it had been born. Kings all the way from that valley where Abram had come from, invaded the land where Abram had gone among the families of Ham. For a time, these kings held, at the very least, political power over some of the land, but eventually the people revolted. This brought the kings of Mesopotamia to attack. Among others in the land, they would attack the very inhabitants of the area Lot had gone into. In doing this, the kings took captives and the wealth of the area and headed for home. This included Lot and all which he had. A survivor of the attack came and told Abram what had happened. Abram with his servants, pursued the kings and defeated them in battle. Abram recovered all which had been taken, including Lot, his family, and wealth.

This incident solidified Abram's place in the land. As Abram returned from the battle, the king of Sodom along with the other kings of the land came out to meet him. There was another person of even greater importance which also came. This man's name was Melchizedek, and he was the king of Salem. Salem means peace, so this man was the king of the city of peace. In later centuries, this city's name would be expanded a bit to mean just that. It would receive the name we know it as today - Jerusalem! Now, Melchizedek was not just another king in the land, he was also "...the priest of the most high God." Genesis 14:18 As a king, and a priest, Melchizedek concerned himself with serving God and making the place he ruled over a peaceful place where The One True God could be known and served! This main fact is why Melchizedek is later mentioned as a figure of Christ. (Heb. 5:1-10, 7) We are not told

Melchizedek had a connection to any family line. There is no indication he is a forefather of Abram, or a ruler over Abram in any way. There is no law which obligates Abram to do it, yet Abram recognizes this man by paying tithes. Abram does this because Melchizedek is a man dedicated unto God, and in the service of God directly!

On the other hand, the king of Sodom told Abram he could keep all the goods he had recovered, and only return the people who had been taken captive. Abram rejected this offer because he did not want anyone to say the kings of the land had made him rich. Abram wanted all the glory for his life to go to God! Abram gave everything back except those provisions which his army of servants had already needed for food during the excursion, and a just wage for them. (Deut. 25:4, Luke 10:5-7) Abram himself kept nothing, and in doing all this, Abram truly showed himself to be a righteous man!

The next events in Abram's life are that of wondering how the covenant God had made with him was going to pass down to anyone, because Abram had no children of his own. What he did have was a head servant who was from Damascus. By tradition this man would be Abram's heir, and receive all which he had and had been promised. However, God confirms the covenant with Abram, and insures him this will not be the case. Abram would have an actual paternal child who would carry on the promise. To accomplish this, Abram and his wife Sarai believe they need to take matters into their own hands, and Sarai

gives her handmaiden to Abram for a wife so he could have a child by her. This handmaiden, named Hagar, who was of Egyptian decent, did conceive a child by Abram; and in the end, Sarai was not happy about it. Sarai deals harshly with her servant, and Hagar flees away from them. As Hagar is out in the wilderness, she is met by an angel of God who tells her to go back, and because God is not slack concerning His promises, God would make her son - being the son of Abram - a multitude! (Gen 16:1-15)

Hagar would return as the angel had told her to, and in Abram's eighty-sixth year, she would give birth to a son whom the angel had told her to name Ishmael. This man was prophesied to be a wild man who would be in conflict with every other family on the planet. (Gen. 16:12) Ishmael would indeed become a multitude as the prophesy had said, as well as continually live among his brethren. His brethren would be those who would come of Abram, the Israelites, Edomites, and nations from six later sons of Abram (Born to a wife Abram would take after Sarai's death. Gen. 25:1-4), as well as the Moabites and the Ammonites (Descendants from Lot). We certainly know this turned out to be true, because Ishmael is the father of those whom we know as Arabs today!

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God came to him and did a couple of major things. First, God changed Abram's name. It was not a big change but a fitting change which would designate Abram would be the father of not just one chosen nation but

many nations. Abram's new name would be Abraham! God would also change the name of Abraham's wife from Sarai, to Sarah. This would also relate to the fact God was going to bring about that son He had already told Abraham would come from both him and Sarah, even though Sarah was well past child bearing years at the age of ninety! The second thing God put into place was the physical seal of the covenant which was/is circumcision. This holds many meanings, but one of the main points was to symbolize that the continuance of Abraham's descendants would not be up to man, but God. This would be true in no greater case than that of the birth of Isaac through Sarah, about a year later. Isaac would be the heir Abraham had been looking for; He would be the only son through which the everlasting covenant of a chosen nation would come, and his birth would be a miracle! Abraham would waste no time circumcising all the males of his house, as well as himself at almost one hundred years old!

Not too long after this, Genesis tells us one of the most amazing things in all the Word of God. One day as Abraham sat in the door of his tent, God Himself came walking by accompanied by two angels. (Gen. 18) Abraham runs out to meet them and is rewarded with an agreement that they would sit and eat with him. At this time, God confirms He will turn back the biological clock for Sarah and she will bear a son. Sarah laughs in herself at this and is scolded for not simply accepting the fact God can do anything!

After the men had eaten, they turn to go on to the valley where Lot had gone to live

and where Sodom and Gomorrah was. God determined it was not good to keep what He was about to do from Abraham, and so God shares the fact He intends to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because it had come to be such a wicked and degraded place. This is an example of God working on more of a one on one level in order to keep man from totally corrupting himself. God would not give the land to Abraham until later generations, because the time to judge the inhabitants of Canaan, in general, had not fully come. (Gen. 15:15-16) However, Sodom and Gomorrah stood as an exception to the rule. These places had gone further into sin than the average inhabitants of the land, and God would clear them from the promised land. This would also show Abraham that God was serious about giving him the land over those who already held it in wickedness. As God revealed to Abraham what He would do to the cities, Abraham shows that he loved mercy. Abraham would plead with God and ask for the cities to be spared if there could be found just a handful of righteous people in them. God agrees; but Abraham comes all the way down to asking for only ten righteous to be found, and there could not even be found that many!

At that point, God leaves off communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his tent. However, the two angels which were with God had continued on to the cities. When they got there, Lot met them; and knowing the city he lived in was evil, he insisted they stay with him and not in the street. That evening the men of the city came to get what they thought were men staying with Lot. Lot attempts to appease the men of the city so they will not harm the angels. The men of the city would not lis-

ten, but the angels did not need Lot's protection. The angels saved Lot and blinded the men outside. Then they shared with Lot the fact God was going to destroy the cities, and told him to get his entire family out. Lot could not convince his sons-in-law to leave. Thus, the angels took Lot, his wife, and the two daughters, still living at home with him, outside the city where they would be instructed not to even look back. This warning would not be heeded by Lot's wife, and she would be turned to a pillar of salt. Abraham would get up the next morning and view the destruction from the place where he had pleaded with the Lord about sparing the cities. The smoke which rose from the destruction should have been a great warning to the rest of the land; and Genesis makes it clear, only because of Abraham was Lot even spared! (Gen. 19:29)

By this time, Lot was so completely entrapped by the idea of living in a city, he desired to be allowed to go into another city instead of out into the countryside as the angels had instructed. Lot would be allowed to go into a city; but out of fear, he would eventually leave that city and dwell in the mountains. It would be there that his two remaining daughters, who were not married and who felt they had no prospects for such, would get their father drunk so they could conceive children who could preserve their father's name. Both daughters would have success and give birth to children who would become the later Moabites and Ammonites.

After this, Abraham would travel to the south along the Mediterranean coast, and

dwell among the people who are known as the Sea People, or Philistines. Again, even though Sarah was over ninety years old, her beauty would continue to feel like a threat. They would stick to the agreement that Sarah would tell people she was Abraham's sister. Another king would attempt to have her, and prove, even among those living in Canaan, there were still those who knew The One True God enough to hear His voice. God would speak to this king and tell him not to touch her but return her to Abraham. This the king would do, but it would still take the prayers of Abraham for the king and his house to be healed of the fact God had closed up all the wombs of the king's house. The king would not thrust Abraham out as Pharaoh had in Egypt. Instead, he told Abraham to live anywhere in the land he pleased!

These stories show us Abraham was not a perfect man in all the choices he made. However, his desire to walk with and be used of God superseded all that. (Rom. 4:1-5) God's plan for Abraham's life required certain things to be true, one of which was that Sarah would bear him a son. She would not be corrupted by other men during these incidences, in spite of man's bad choices. God would preserve the integrity of Abraham and Sarah's union and bring to pass the son who would go on to carry forth the covenant. Just as God had told them, at the time God had told them, it would happen. Sarah gave birth to a son, and they named him Isaac, just as God had told them to!

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 4

which truly gets in our way. Ultimately, no matter what form of government or way to form a government we choose, there ends up being force used to implement and maintain it. This is not true cooperation. Most of the time, it simply boils down to the strong ruling over the weak in one form or another! Because man has not learned the ways of righteousness, only on rare occasions is force used to truly insure that the strong and/or the many are not oppressing the weak and/or the few.

Now, I'm not teaching that we should overthrow the government where we each live; because with the way man has chosen to live, today the only thing which changes with the overthrow of one government is the question of, who is in power next, and possibly, what form of government is then used? How good or bad this all turns out to be for each individual who must live under the system is always a question; and without God, it's never a great percentage of truly positive change for righteousness. Our conversation here really is not about promoting or dashing any particular form of government; it is only pointing out that without cooperation from all people to, at the very least, respect the fundamentals of human rights for all to make their own choices, government by the strong is what it all boils down to! That is where our choices have led us, and we are left with very little wiggle room. (Rom. 13:1-8) We are talking about this because as we go from Genesis chapter 10 verse 5 into verse 6, we begin a discussion of Ham's family, and the story there shows us how we came to this!

Ham's family does not just choose the base idea of Cain's - which is to build a city

and obligate people to stay in a group. Ham's family begins to use force to centralize power even across cities, so all men will work toward a common goal. Now, we will have to come back to geographical and naming facts such as is given in verse 5, where we are told Japheth's family populated the isles of the Gentiles; and believe me, we will want to talk about where the families eventually went and how it affected the way later events unfolded. However, for the time, we want to stay focused on the lead up to the story which begins in earnest at the beginning of chapter 11. It was not until after the events of the story in chapter 11 that the later land separation of the families occurred; and in spite of what some believe, not dividing up the land along family lines is not something God was punishing man for in confounding his language. To see this, we need to glean the story lines which exist in Genesis chapter 10 which have to do with the fact post-flood humanity did not divide across the world, no matter how those divisions may have been made. Instead, they chose a path which kept everyone together; and by the time of the tower, the die had been cast!

This is why Genesis chapter 10 verse 6 tells us the first post-flood generation of Ham's family consisted of four sons. The second generation would consist of many more, but one would be pointed out specifically as having an impact like none of the others. This is the basis of what we have been talking about. Verse 6 & 7 give us names, and verse 13 picks up where those verses left off. In between, we are given a short story about the actions of one man which began the very long-term implications we have been discussing!

Verse 8 tells us the son of Ham, named

Cush, begat a son named Nimrod. Nimrod is singled out because he would not be simply part of the growing crowd of individuals, regardless of whether his specific descendants would or would not go on to form a tribe or nation. It tells us Nimrod, as an individual, began to be a mighty man among all the men living on the earth at that time. If you remember, prior to the flood in Genesis chapter 6, there is reference to the fact there were “giants” in the world. These were not the offspring of some supernatural interbreeding, but the fact there began to be men who oppressed other people with their wickedness. In spite of these terrible happenings, the group of people who served God began and continued to take wives from among the people who did not serve God. They no longer cared about being unequally yoked with those who did not follow or believe in God's ways of righteousness. (II Cor. 6:14) There eventually became such a tremendous intermingling among those who served God and those who did not, there was no longer a distinction between the groups. There became just a world full of people, and the only distinction was that among the world's population there came to be what was referred to as “mighty men.” In that time, the mighty men were men who served God, and thus were referred to as “...men of renown.” Genesis 6:4 This then was in contrast to the very evil men who were referred to as “giants.”

Here in chapter 10, Nimrod is said to be developing into a mighty man! However, he was not a man of renown because he was not known for being a righteous man. Nimrod was a man who rose to a level of importance and recognition due to his accomplishments. He was impressive, and unlike the giants

before the flood who oppressed people by being so evil, Nimrod was a man who impressed people in ways which caused them to want to follow him as their leader! This is why verse 9 goes on to tell us what Nimrod was first known for. It says, “He was a mighty hunter before The Lord:...” This is thought of in today's world as meaning Nimrod was good at killing animals, and of that I have no doubt. In fact, the point that he was very accomplished in hunting animals for the sake of food would have been impressive, because it was just on this side of the flood that people were given permission to eat animals. (Gen 9:1-4) Even those who may have taken on the practice without God's permission, before the flood, were dealing with animals which did not fear humans and would have been easy to capture. Hunting animals in the post-flood environment where there were not as yet great numbers of animals on the planet, due to the flood, as well as the animals fearing and evading man, would have been something special to be good at. However, on top of this is the fact hunting does not exclusively refer to the hunting of animals. Nimrod was a man who, in all forms of hunting, was of great accomplishment. Because of his skills, Nimrod was a man who could provide for more than just his own family. People began to depend on his skills as a great provider!

The reference to Nimrod being a man who was mighty “...before The Lord.” has to do with what we started out talking about when it comes to government. Many people see government not just as a necessary thing, but as a very good thing! Just on this side of the flood, God once again had the opportunity to come more directly among men. It

may not have been as direct as the way He walked with Cain and Abel, but more direct than our sin allows today - by far! This means people were familiar with God, and the fact there was only One True God. However, Nimrod was a man who set himself apart from the ordinary man; and in doing this, he took on a more godlike persona in the eyes of other people. In other words, Nimrod was closer to being like God in their eyes than just the ordinary man on the street. This happened in spite of the fact Nimrod was not a man of renown for being righteous. This is the beginning of a phenomena which grew and explains the way we see later government leaders being looked at in many areas. Places like Egypt believed their leader was not just closer to what, by then was "the gods," but Pharaoh was considered a god himself. The later Greeks and Romans continued this kind of belief in many ways, and even today a great number of people see their leaders as being something more than just your average person. This can be true even if that something more is only defined by the fact the person was popular enough to be voted into office!

Now, this propensity comes from the fact that we are meant to be under God's leadership. We are to be looking to Him for our guidance just as children look to their parents. However, if we refuse to look to God for that purpose, we find there is a need, and we fill that need by looking to other people. Because we are all born with the knowledge there is a True God, we often translate our natural understanding to a person or persons in leadership, whoever they may be. (Rom. 1:15-23) In doing this, our human leaders take on a godlike status in our mind. Generally, people see their leaders as lower than God, and many would say they do not see

their leader as a god. However, when we revere another person, especially for their abilities, we think of them as being closer to God than we are. When we do this, we see those leaders as able to set standards of right and wrong which they do not have the authority to set. This is what happened with Nimrod. In truth, Nimrod was nothing more than a man; but the abilities which he showed were abilities people elevate. People usually elevate physical abilities, which is clearly what Nimrod had; and because of this, Nimrod was, in the minds of men, somewhere between common man and God. Therefore, he was not just a mighty hunter in the earth, but a mighty hunter - before The Lord!

On the basis of what Nimrod was able to do, coupled with how people saw him, the reality was that Nimrod began to be mighty, not just among his own family, but in the earth. Nimrod became the model for what a leader and eventual ruler should look like. Therefore, when later individuals met the criteria in people's minds as to what greatness looked like, they would compare them to this first man who set the bar. "...wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." Genesis 10:9 These facts are why some people say Nimrod was, at the very least, the first false messiah. This belief is true and untrue! Here is one of those points where it is imperative we understand the truth that God is interacting with us on the basis of our choices. The word "Messiah" denotes an expected deliverer or liberator. It is someone others look to as the ultimate hope for their existence. The Jews look for such a person because it was prophesied the Jews would receive The True Messiah from The One True God. (Gen. 12:1-3, Num. 24:14-19. Ps. 2) Those who in

truth believe Jesus to be the Christ, whether they define it properly or not, are saying Jesus is That True Messiah from The One True God prophesied to come through the Jewish nation. (Matt. 16:13-17) Because God is dealing with us based on the choices we make, we should realize Nimrod holds a special place in the timeline. Nimrod is not so much the first false messiah, Nimrod is the man who brought about the reason there would need to be a True Messiah!

Now, this is complicated stuff for many people to grasp, but look at it from the time period in which Nimrod existed. In that time period, there were no religions as we know them today. One of the whole problems with the Tower of Babel is that it began the tradition of forming religions, and Nimrod would be a big part of why it happened the way it did! The world was all of one language. There was also not a very large population of humans on the planet, and they were, for the most part, all living within very close proximity to each other. If there was a singular person such as Nimrod in that situation (and there was), that man would have the opportunity men who desire authority today can only dream of! Such a man could easily be the ruler of the world in a big way just because he was so revered. This is exactly what happened. A great number of the people alive at that time were so enamored with Nimrod, they made him their undisputed ruler. Once he began to move with force, any minority outside of this belief didn't have much of a chance!

If Nimrod could become the ruler or even the greatly revered leader of a great number of people in his day, mostly on the basis of

his perceived superior abilities, it shows a general propensity among men to reject God on a fundamental level. This is a problem we face even in our churches today. People want another human to follow, more than they want a direct relationship with God! There are many other things people will raise to godlike status, but none more than other individuals. All this is why God said the greatest commandment is to love Him with everything you are. (Mark 12:29-30) God also made the first commandment, out of the Ten Commandments, that we have no other gods before Him. (Ex. 20:3) There are many leaders and many mighty men who people in this world look to for their guidance, direction, and deliverance; but only God can truly bring all that! God being the loving God He is, knows we have trouble not just following a man who impresses us, and that is why He came down in the form of a man to save us! (Phili. 2:5-11) God came down and walked among us. (Matt. 1:22-23) He came showing Himself to be everything we truly have need of. (John 4:5-29) Jesus came to be The True Messiah which only God could truly provide and which we could only hope would come, yet man rejected Him! This shows, it will always be up to each individual whether we will follow God as our personal Lord and Saviour. However, when Jesus returns to this planet for a second time, it will not be as a humble baby, born to humble parents. Next time, Jesus will be The Conqueror of conquerors; and we will finally see force in this world being used for righteousness! (Rev. 19:11-21)

Until next time, Shalom!