

Genesis 11:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Analysis

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to... This passage belongs to the primeval history section (Genesis 1-11) which establishes universal truths about God, humanity, sin, and divine purposes before focusing on Abraham and Israel. These chapters answer fundamental questions about human origins, the spread of wickedness, God's judgment, and the preservation of a righteous remnant.

Recurring patterns emerge: human sin escalating from individual disobedience to societal corruption, divine patience followed by judgment, gracious preservation of a remnant, and covenant promises ensuring redemptive purposes continue. The genealogies connect historical persons, demonstrate the fulfillment of divine promises (blessing and multiplication), and trace the line leading to Abraham and ultimately Christ.

Key theological themes in this section include:

1. sin's destructive progression affecting all humanity
2. God's righteous judgment while preserving mercy
3. human pride and autonomy opposing divine sovereignty
4. cultural development as both blessing and potential idolatry
5. God's sovereign plan advancing despite human rebellion.

These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding God's calling of Abraham and the covenant promises through which all nations will be blessed.

Historical Context

The primeval history (Genesis 1-11) parallels ancient Near Eastern traditions including Sumerian King Lists (pre-flood longevity), Akkadian flood traditions (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh), and Mesopotamian city foundation myths. However, Genesis demythologizes these traditions, presenting monotheistic history rather than polytheistic mythology. The genealogies connecting Adam to Noah to Abraham provide historical framework absent in pagan myths.

Archaeological evidence confirms ancient urbanization (chapter 4's cities), agricultural development, metallurgy, and musical instruments emerging in Mesopotamia's early history. The Babel account reflects Mesopotamian ziggurat construction (stepped pyramid temples), particularly in Babylon. Linguistic diversity requiring explanation was obvious to ancient peoples, making the Babel narrative culturally relevant.

For Israel in covenant with Yahweh, these chapters explained their relationship to surrounding nations. All peoples descended from Noah, but Israel descended from Shem through Abraham—chosen for blessing all nations. The flood demonstrated God's justice and mercy: judging wickedness while preserving the righteous. This pattern would recur throughout Israel's history, assuring them that God's covenant faithfulness endures despite judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה ה	ה	עַם	אֶחָת	וּשְׂפָה ה
said	And the LORD	H2005	Behold the people	and they have all one	language
H559	H3068		H5971	H259	H8193
אֶחָת	לְכָל ה	וְה	הֵחֵל עַם	לַעֲשׂוֹת:	וַעֲתָה
and they have all one	H3605	H2088	and this they begin	to do	H6258
H259			H2490	H6213	
לֹא	יִבָּצֵר	יָמָה עַל	אֲשֶׁר		
and now nothing	will be restrained	H1992	H3605	H834	
H3808	H1219				
מִזֵּם ו	לַעֲשׂוֹת:				
from them which they have imagined	to do				
H2161	H6213				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 3:22 (References Lord): And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Genesis 11:1 (Parallel theme): And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart,

and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Genesis 6:5 (Parallel theme): And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Luke 1:51 (Parallel theme): He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Genesis 8:21 (References Lord): And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Genesis 9:19 (Parallel theme): These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.