



Sunday, August 31, 2025

Genesis 10 & 11

Today we find ourselves at the conclusion of our series through the first half of the Bible, Genesis 1-11. That's right, and if you've been with us for any of these messages you would have learned that what Genesis 1-11 does, is present the creation of the world, the introduction of humanity and the problem of sin. And then, literally, everything between Genesis 12 - Revelation 22 acts as a response to the events that have taken place in the first 11 chapters.

And what's really interesting, is that in our reading today we will see that the first half of the Bible ends with the building of a city, and then the second half of the Bible also ends with the building of a city. In Genesis 11, it is man's attempt to reach God through the tower of Babel, and then in Revelation 22 it's the new Jerusalem - the holy city of God, descending from heaven as His gift of redemption and grace to us.

And as we'll see, the whole story of the Bible is really a journey between those two cities - from Babel's scattering, to Pentecost's gathering, to the New Jerusalem where every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship together in the presence of God.

Now, in our reading today, we will be focusing on chapters 10-11 which theologians call a spiritual sandwich where we have the story of the tower of babel sandwiched between the genealogy of the people on earth at that time. The genealogy starts in chapter ten and then pauses to make way for the story of the Tower of Babel in the beginning of chapter 11 and then resumes in verse ten, until the end of the chapter.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning I invite you to turn with me to Genesis 11 verse one to nine. And if you are able to, I invite you to stand for the reading of the word of God:

Genesis 11:1-9

'Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 3 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.'

In our reading today, you may or may not have noticed that in the first verse we read that the world had one language and one speech. However, if we look back at Chapter 10, we see that the people had already been separated into various groups according to their language which would seem to suggest a discrepancy between the presented order of events:

Genesis 10:5

'From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.'

Genesis 11:1

'Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.'

(Put both scriptures up on one slide)

So, how could the whole earth have one language and speech if they had already been separated according to their language. So, although this seems like a glaring discrepancy, I want you to see that it is not contradictory, but complementary because Genesis 10 and 11 aren't meant to be read strictly in order; rather, they overlap. Chapter 10 gives us the big picture - the scattering of the nations whereas Chapter 11 zooms in on the cause - the Tower of Babel. So when we read that, 'the whole earth had one language,' that's talking about the world before the tower. And when we read in chapter 10 that the nations are divided by language, that's talking about the world after the tower.

In other words, Babel explains how the scattering of chapter 10 came to be.

We've actually seen this pattern before - specifically with the creation story. Genesis 1 tells the overview and then Genesis 2 zooms in on the specifics of the creation of Adam and Eve.

So with that framework in mind, let's step full on into the story this morning and see what the Holy Spirit has in store for us.

The first thing I'd like you to see is that the construction of this tower that was aimed at challenging God's authority was doomed from the very beginning. Meaning, that even if God had not intervened, this would have failed regardless. Let me explain:

Verse 3 says: "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

This tells us that the tower being built was of brick instead of stone. Anyone at that time would have known that stone was a far superior element to build with - especially for an undertaking of this magnitude. Just look at the pyramids in Egypt for example. Each one of them constructed out of stone and have lasted millennia. No building built out of dried bricks in the first century has ever stood the test of time. So right off the bat, we see that this tower was being built on a weak and unstable foundation. What the people thought was a great innovation - burning bricks instead of relying on stone - was actually a step down in quality and durability.

The lesson being clear: No matter how advanced, creative, or determined humanity may be, when the foundation is not God Himself, it cannot last. Which, if you follow history a little bit, you would know that even though the building of the tower was disrupted that day, Babel as a city continued to be built and eventually became known as the infamous Babylon. In its day, Babylon was known as the greatest of all cities with incredible infrastructure and innovation. However, it was also known as one the most wicked and Godless cities and as a result, in 539 BC, Babylon itself fell to the Persians, and what was once the pride of the nations became a pile of ruins. Reminding us that anything that is built on a foundation apart from God may look impressive for a time, but it will never endure. Which is why the connection between Babel and the new Jerusalem is important because Babel represents a foundation that is built upon man's attempt to replace God by being their own gods, whereas the new city of Jerusalem represents a foundation built by God Himself - a city not made with human hands, but established on Christ the cornerstone. Babel shows us the futility of man trying to climb up to heaven; the New Jerusalem shows us the beauty of God bringing heaven down

to dwell with man.

Which is actually really interesting, because from this point forward, this concept of, 'building upon a strong foundation' becomes a major theme all throughout Scripture. Hebrews tells us that God Himself is the architect and builder whose foundation is unshakable. Jesus, in the Gospels, declares that He is the rock - and that anyone who builds on sand, or anything other than Him for that matter, will see their house fall. And again the Gospels tell us that Jesus is the cornerstone - the measuring line by which everything else must be aligned. If what we build doesn't line up with Him, it simply will not and cannot stand.

So the people of the earth take the bricks and begin to build a city, with a tower rising up from its center. Their goal? 'So that we will not be scattered across the face of the whole earth.' This is an interesting response. If they build a city, then everything they need will be right there at their fingertips. They won't have to spread out. They won't have to fill the world. So, why is this such a bad idea?

But do you see the problem with that? When Noah came off the ark, one of the very first instructions God gave him was the same one He gave to Adam and Eve at creation: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' (Gen. 9:1). Humanity was meant to spread out, to reflect the image of God not just in part of the world, but all across the globe, to fill every corner of creation with His glory.

Instead, the people at Babel said: 'No, let's gather. Let's centralize. Let's stay right here. Let's make our own name great.' It was a direct act of rebellion against God's purpose. Instead of filling the earth with God's glory, they wanted to concentrate 'their own glory' in one place. So you can see now, why this would have been such an affront to God.

Their attempt then, to build the tower came from a heart that was set towards self-glorification instead of God-glorification. Hence the goal: to make a name for ourselves. It wasn't about reflecting God's name, but about replacing it with their own. It wasn't about lifting up the name of their Creator, but about lifting themselves up instead.

We have a word for that and it's called...Pride.

The same pride that had slithered its way into the Garden with Adam and Eve was now penetrating the very heart of humanity even after the flood. The same pride that said, 'You can be like God' (Gen. 3:5), now said, 'We will not only be like God, but we will build our way up to God.'

So, what does God do with all this? Well, He can't wipe them out because of His promise through the rainbow. So He decides to confront them instead. And how does He do it? By coming down.

Now, if you were to read this in the ancient Hebrew, you'd notice that this next section was rife with sarcasm. It doesn't necessarily translate as such in the English, but make no mistake, it's there. Of course God doesn't need to come down to see their project - He already sees everything. But by saying He has to 'come down,' the writer of Genesis is mocking the absurdity of it all. Their so-called tower, built of bricks, was so small and insignificant from heaven's perspective that God has to stoop down just to look at it.

The very fact that humanity thought they could storm the heavens with mud bricks shows just how ignorant and arrogant their hearts had become.

But this is what pride ultimately does. It blinds our eyes and deceives our hearts - making us seek after false desires, thinking that they will satisfy, when in reality they only leave us emptier.

And God knows this all too well. He's seen this progression of pride before with Adam and Eve, and so instead of letting it completely overtake them, in His grace and mercy, God steps in and changes the way they communicate. Suddenly they can't understand each other. And the very thing they feared - being scattered - is exactly what happens and they actually end up fulfilling God's original command to 'fill the earth.' They wanted to make their own name great; but God alone is great and in His sovereignty, He made sure that His will would be accomplished anyway.

Reminds me of another kind of dispersion, doesn't it? In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, God once again stepped down - not to scatter in judgment, but to unite in grace. Instead of confusing their language, He gave the disciples the miraculous ability to speak in every language so that everyone in Jerusalem could hear the Gospel message in their own tongue. It's a powerful reversal of Babel. In Genesis 11, humanity was dispersed in punishment and in Acts 2, the church was dispersed in power with purpose. One scattering was judgment; the other was mission.

And then that's it. The story of Babel finishes. The tower is half built, so is the city. The people scatter and everyone in Babel is left to pick up the pieces. There is confusion, frustration, and likely even anger. But in spite of all of that, one thing remains absolutely clear: God is sovereign. He alone is the One whose name will be great. Humanity may try to build monuments to themselves, but in the end, every tower crumbles and every kingdom falls - except His. Babel was left in ruins, but the name of the Lord endures forever.

And then the writer turns it back over to the bottom half of the sandwich as we continue with the genealogy of Shem.

I know this officially concludes the series of Genesis 1–11, but if we peek ahead into chapter 12, we see something incredibly important. There, we meet a man named Abram, and with him begins God's plan to send His Son through a people He would call His own. And isn't it striking that right after Babel - where humanity tried to make a name for themselves - God now turns to Abram and says, 'I will make your name great.' Again, this is Babel reversed. At Babel, humanity tried to make a name for themselves apart from God, and it ended in scattering and confusion. With Abram though, God Himself promises to make his name great because ultimately it would not be about Abram's greatness, but about God's. Through Abram's line would come the nation of Israel, and through Israel would come the Messiah, Jesus Christ - the true Son of God, the Name above every name, the One through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed.

As we close this morning, I'm reminded of foundation. If you think about it, this whole series through Genesis 1–11 has really been about foundation. Creation showed us God's foundation for life. The fall showed us what happens when that foundation is rejected. The flood reminded us that sin cannot be ignored. And now at Babel, we see once again that anything built apart from God will not stand.

So here are two things I want us to take with us:

Our foundation must be in God alone. Babel's bricks could not last, and neither can any life, family, or church that builds apart from Him. But when we build on Christ, the true cornerstone, what we build will endure.

God's Spirit empowers us for His mission. At Babel, language divided and the people scattered; at Pentecost, however, the Spirit united and sent out. And that same Spirit is still empowering us today - not to make our name great, but to make His name known.

And I don't think it's any coincidence that tonight is our big mission to the community. Just as the people in Acts were filled with the Spirit and sent out, my prayer is that each one of us here would be filled, sent, and ready to shine His light in our city.

And what better moment to put this into practice than commissioning our students, who are stepping into their own mission fields with the start of school on Tuesday?

Call up Bryan for Student Commissioning

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you

May He cause His face to Shine upon you

May He be gracious towards you

Lifting up His countenance before you

And may He give you peace

In Jesus name, Amen.

Pastor Josh Hageman

Lead Pastor

Kingsview Community Church

Stoney Creek, ON

www.kingsviewchurch.com

<https://www.facebook.com/KingsviewCommunityChurch/>