

# The Tower Of Power

Genesis 11:1-9

## I. Tower Of Power: Man's Pride In Human Achievement (11:1-4)

### A. Human \_\_\_\_\_ Apart From God (1-2)

*1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

### B. Human \_\_\_\_\_ Apart From God (3-4a)

*3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4a Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower*

### C. Human \_\_\_\_\_ Against God (4b, cf. Rev 17:5; Ps 2:1-3)

*4b with its top in the heavens,*

### D. Human \_\_\_\_\_ Apart From God (4c; cf. Gen 5:17; 12:2)

*4c and let us make a name for ourselves,*

### E. Human \_\_\_\_\_ Apart From God (4d)

*4d lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."*

## II. Ball Of Confusion: God's Judgment Of Confusion And Dispersion (11:5-9)

### A. Man Conspires, God Retires (5-6; Prov 19:21)

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### B. Man Misuses, God Confuses (7, 9a)

*<sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."<sup>9a</sup> Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.*

### C. Man Subverts, God Disperses (8, 9b)

*<sup>8</sup> So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9b</sup> And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.*

## Conclusion:

1. God has a great plan for the nations – to \_\_\_\_\_ them in Christ. (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:46; Acts 1:8)
2. God has a great purpose for the nations – to \_\_\_\_\_ as one Church in Christ (Acts 2:5-11; Gal 3:28)
3. God has a great role for the nations – to have \_\_\_\_\_ on the earth for God's glory. (Rev 5:9-10)
4. God has a great future for the nations – to \_\_\_\_\_ Christ together forever. (Rev 21:22-27)

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## Genesis 11:1-9

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#### A. Human Security Apart From God (1-2)

*1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

- "the whole earth" – Were there enough people to disperse at Babel?

According to Jonathan Safarti, *The Genesis Account*, p. 658:

- Noah's sons averaged 10.7 children
  - Shem (14 grandsons), Japheth (23), Ham (28) – 65 grandsons (plus equal amount of granddaughters = 130)
  - Weighted average is 8.53 children per couple x 65 couples = 554 third generation kids
  - 2365 4<sup>th</sup> generation
  - 3,000 people alive at this point
  - 10,000 people if it was one more generation
- "one language" = lit. "one lip" (Waltke)
    - several commentators suggest Hebrew was the one language because of the names used of the first people, but that can't be verified with certainty

- “migrated” = people were anxious about migrating after the flood
- ESV says “migrated from the east” but most commentators say the Hebrew points to migrating **to** the east
- Shinar
  - “a plain” = good for agriculture
- Nimrod – the founder of Babel

**Genesis 10:9-10** <sup>9</sup> He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” <sup>10</sup> The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of **Shinar**.

- The Bible doesn’t cite Nimrod as the initiator of the rebellion, but **Josephus** (Roman Historian of 1<sup>st</sup> century) does: “Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them no to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured the happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on hi power. He also said he would be revenged of God if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! And that we would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!” (*Antiquities 1, 3-4*)
- “**settled there**” = opposite of filling the earth and multiply (Heb 9:1)
- **vs. Genesis 9:1** Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth

Action	Purpose	Desire
They built a city ....	... in order not to be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.	Security
They built a tower with its top in the heavens ...	... in order to make a name for themselves.	Praise

Chart from ESV Study Bible, p. 69

## B. Human Achievement Apart From God (3-4a)

*3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4a Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower*

- Moses is reciting their quote which is self-condemning “Come, let us make”
- Baked bricks and tar (bitumen) for mortar
- “**tower**” = Heb. *migdal*, from *gd*l meaning “great”
  - this word has been used to describe the defensive buildings of Canaan, but in this case is refers to a Mesopotamian ziggurat.

- Ziggurats were huge, solid-brick structures with built in staircases
- There were often temples attached to them
- A couple of motivations for the tower's height has been suggested:
  - A tower high enough to protect them from the flood (symbolically)
  - A tower to practice astrology
  - A tower of pride – looking down at God through human accomplishments
  - A tower to invite false gods
- But the real motivation is revealed in v. 4 – it is a defiance to build a city instead of filling the earth

**Genesis 9:1** Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth

Ie/ The European Union Parliament Building in Strasbourg, France is designed after Brueghel's painting of the Tower of Babel

### C. **Human Rebellion Against God (4b)**

*4b with its top in the heavens,*

- "top in the heavens" = a gate to heaven
- Babel means "gate to heaven"
- Temples to false gods were often at the top of these Ziggurats
- Warren Wiersbe: "The 'tower' that they built at Babel was what is known as a 'ziggurat.' Archeologists have excavated several of these large structures which were built primarily for religious purposes. A ziggurat was like a pyramid except that the successive levels were recessed so that you could walk to the top on 'steps.' **At the top was a special shrine dedicated to a god or goddess. In building the structure, the people weren't trying to climb up to heaven to dethrone God; rather, they hoped that the god or goddess they worshipped would come down from heaven to meet them.** The structure and the city were called "Babel," which means "the gate of the gods." (2010-01-01). *Be Basic (Genesis 1-11): Believing the Simple Truth of God's Word (The BE Series Commentary)* (p. 154). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.
- Arnold Fruchtenbaum: "The purpose of this tower was for the purpose of astrology, or the signs of the zodiac. This act marks the beginnings of false religion and idolatry." (*The Book Of Genesis: The Ariel Bible Commentary*, p. 223)
- Bruce Waltke points out: "Like Jacob's staircase (see Gen. 28: 12), the ziggurat mountain, with its roots in the earth and its lofty top in the clouds, served in mythopoeic thought as a gate to heaven. This humanly created mountain gave humanity access to heaven (28: 17) and served as a convenient stairway for the gods to come down into their temple and into the city. For example, the ziggurat at Larsa was named "The House of the Link Between Heaven and Earth" and the most famous ziggurat of all, at Babylon, "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth." The ziggurat culminated in a small shrine at the top, often painted with blue enamel to make it blend with the celestial home of the gods. Here

the addition "to the heavens" shows they are vying with God himself. The Lord, not humankind, dwells in the heavens (Gen. 19: 24; 21: 17; 22: 11, 15; Deut. 26: 15; Ps. 115: 16)." *Waltke, Bruce K.; Waltke, Bruce K. (2016-11-22). Genesis: A Commentary (p. 179). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*

- **Revelation 17:5** calls Babylon the Great the Mother of all Harlots because of the religious adultery consummated in this nation

**Psalm 2:1-3** <sup>1</sup> Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

- Babel has come to symbolize man's defiance and independence from God

#### **D. Human Recognition Apart From God (4c)**

4c and let us make a name for ourselves,

- Pride was their motivation – to make a name for themselves
- Cain built a city and named after his son – he wanted to perpetuate his name

**Genesis 5:17** Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.

- Man's failed plans are evidenced by the fact that nobody today knows who built the Tower of Babel (though they tried to make a name for themselves)
- But God made Abraham's name great (Genesis 12:2)

**Genesis 12:2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your **name great**, so that you will be a blessing

#### **E. Human Control Apart From God (4d)**

4d lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

- The people at Babel also defied God's instruction to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1)
- They didn't want to be dispersed

ie/ In my High School years, FBC had one youth group spanning Jr Hi, HS, college and career. I loved it! When the plan was to start a High School group called CTF with me as the Prez, PK as the VP and Theresa Gee (then Wong) as the Treasurer – I really didn't want to disperse. But I submitted to God's direction.

Ie/ There might be a fellowship or Bible study that loves being together. Maybe it's time to divide to start 2 healthy new Bible studies.

Ie/ We looked at a church building so we could grow bigger and have 500 people in one service. We saw the Lord directing us to stay here – have more services if we grow and plant a church or two in the future. That means dispersing.

- All of these changes for growth can only come if we don't resist God's plan

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- "the Lord came down to see" = anthropomorphic satire (Fruchtenbaum), God left His throne to visit this puny city and tower
- God made man's great plan a work of futility
- **"Man proposes, but God disposes."** That familiar statement is almost a religious cliché. Many people who use it don't even know what it means. It was written by the Augustinian monk Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380–1471) in his classic book *On the Imitation of Christ*. An expanded version is the proverb, **"Man does what he can, God does what He will."** *Wiersbe, Warren W. (2010-01-01). Be Basic (Genesis 1-11): Believing the Simple Truth of God's Word (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 153). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.*

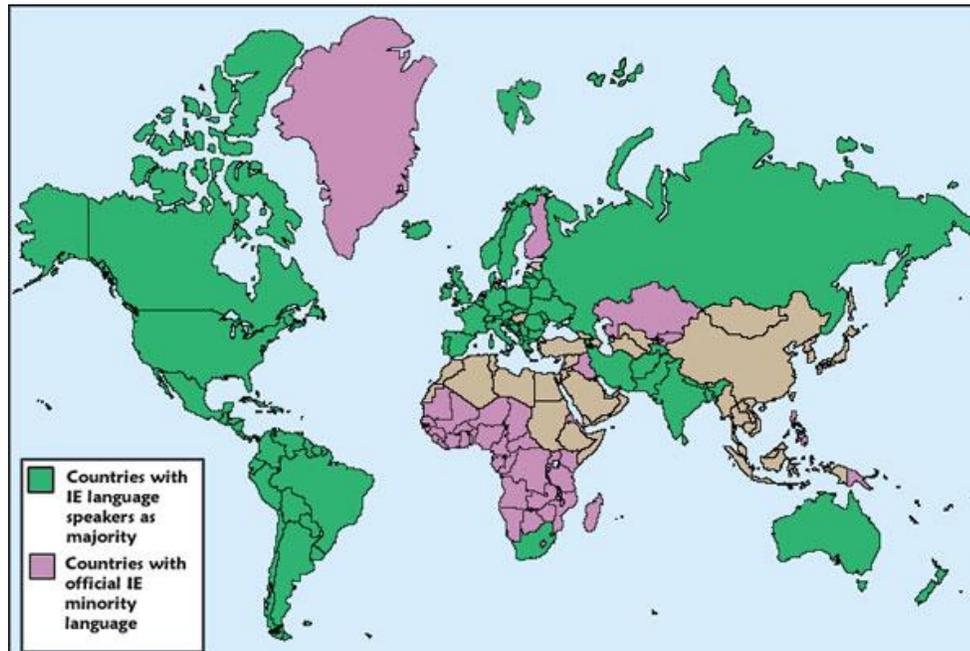
**Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

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- "confused" = Heb. *balal*
  - Biblically a *balal* of confusion
- Though God is not the Author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33), He will use it to bring judgment to those who defy Him

- 6,900 languages spoken in our world today
- 94 different language families
- 44% of world speak an Indo-European language



[http://www.vistawide.com/languages/language\\_families\\_statistics1.htm](http://www.vistawide.com/languages/language_families_statistics1.htm)

Top 10 Languages:

<https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/the-10-most-spoken-languages-in-the-world>

1. Chinese – 1.2 billion
2. Spanish – 400 million
3. English – 360 million
4. Hindi – most spoken among India's official 23 languages
5. Arabic – 250 million
6. Portuguese – 215 million
7. Bengali – 170 million
8. Russian – 170 million
9. Japanese – 130 million
10. Punjabi/Landha – 100 million
11. German

### C. **Man Subverts, God Disperses (8, 9b)**

<sup>8</sup> So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9b</sup> And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

- They didn't finish building the city
- God dispersed them around the world
- Babel is pretty central for the people to disperse throughout Europe, Asia and Africa

- 70 nations in Genesis 10
- 11,489 people groups in world today
  - 6,832 have a population less than 2% Christian
  - 3,264 have no Christian witness
- God's original determination was to have several nations across the earth, according to the Apostle Paul

**Acts 17:26** And he made from one man, **every nation** of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having **determined** allotted **periods** and the **boundaries** of their dwelling place

## Conclusion:

1. **God has a great plan for the nations – to save them in Christ.** (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:46; Acts 1:8)

**Matthew 28:18–20** Go, therefore and make disciples of **all nations**. Baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

**Luke 24:46** Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

**Acts 1:8** You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in all Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

- The Church, as One body of Christ, is the reversal of Babylon
- The Church is to be united **in** Christ, **not outside** of Christ

2. **God has a great purpose for the nations – to unite as one Church in Christ** (Acts 2:5-11; Gal 3:28)

**Acts 2:5-11** 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from **every nation under heaven**. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

**Galatians 3:28** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

**3. God has a great role for the nations – to have dominion on the earth for God’s glory.** (Rev 5:9-10)

**Revelation 5:9-10** <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your **blood** you ransomed people for God **from every tribe and language and people and nation**, <sup>10</sup> and you have made them kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’”

**4. God has a great future for the nations – to worship Christ together forever.** (Rev 21:22-27)

**Revelation 21:22-27** <sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the **nations** walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the **nations**. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

**Zephaniah 3:9** For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.