

**SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 11

SERMON NOTES:

“How did the world get the way that it is today?” Why are there so many nations and languages, peoples groups, belief systems, ideologies, and currencies? Why is there so much confusion and chaos and disorder among people groups?

Maybe you’ve asked yourself this question or maybe you’ve had someone else propose this question to you. I believe that this is a very important question that we ask and seek to find an answer to. People throughout history have attempted to explain these things with ideas like evolution and mutation over time. And some of these things are true in regards to micro-evolution, right, such as our different skin colors and stature depending on one’s relation to the equator or our availability for food over time.

However, the crazy thing is, the most recent studies show that all of the human population today can be traced back to just 3 different genetic groups. These recent studies have shown that population genetics aren’t nearly as different as they would have expected and that was long-time believed among evolutionists.

David Brown, writing an article for the Washington Post, in 2009 said this, **“*Scientists have long known that regardless of ancestral home or ethnic group, everyone’s genes are pretty much alike. We’re all Homo sapiens. Everything else is pretty much details.*”** He went on to say, **“*Population geneticists expected to find dramatic differences . . . [but] that’s not what scientists have found. Dramatic genome variation among populations turns out to be extremely rare.*”**

For the Christian, those of us who believe in the Creation account of the Bible, that God is the Creator of all the universe, this makes total sense doesn’t it? It’s fascinating that all humans can be traced back to just 3 genetic groups, which could very well be the sons of Noah found here in Genesis. Not only that but all humans are actually the same skin color. We are all a different shade of brown depending on the amount of melanin in our skin.

There are over 11,000 languages in the world and anywhere from 13,000-24,000 people groups depending on how you classify them. **But once again, how did it get this way?**

The book of Genesis is a book about origins. It teaches us about our beginning as human beings. In Genesis we see how we were created, as image bearers of God. We see why we are sinful by nature, through the curse of Adam's disobedience. We see that God is a God of justice and He holds man responsible for taking dominion over the earth and being obedient to His commands.

In the book of Genesis we can trace our human origins all the way back to the first man Adam. And in Genesis 11, we come to learn why there are so many languages and nations that fill the earth, why there is not just one language and one people group. Genesis 10 and 11 gives us the account of what happened during the time after the flood, where God spared only the family of Noah, and before the call of Abraham, the father of our faith.

Just as Pastor Erik mentioned last week, Genesis 11 should not be read as if it happened chronologically after the events in chapter 10 but rather Genesis 11 being a commentary on what happened during the time in chapter 10. Most scholars believe that The Tower of Babel happened during the reign of Nimrod and the first place we are introduced to "Babel" in Genesis 10. Look back at what it says, starting in verse 8.

8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. – Genesis 10:8-10

So here we are introduced to Babel and the land of Shinar where the building of the tower of Babel took place. It seems as if Nimrod was the leader of this construction and this rebellion against God. We also see in the genealogy of the sons of Shem that the earth was divided during the days of Peleg. So once again, it seems as if Moses, the writer of Genesis, is showing us that The Tower of Babel occurred sometime during the time of Nimrod and Peleg.

Today's text can be broken down into 3 major sections:

Verses 1-9: The events at the tower of Babel.

Verses 10-25: The genealogy and descendants of Shem.

Verses 26-32: The descendants of Terah and the introduction of Abram.

To begin this message I want to give you an overview of these last two sections in verses 10-32 and then I want to spend the second half of the message focusing on the events at the tower of Babel.

MAIN IDEA: God is sovereignly working through nations and languages, despite their sinfulness, to bring about His plan of redemption and restoration.

VS10-25 -- 10 These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. 11 And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters. 12 When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. 13 And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters. 14 When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. 15 And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters. 16 When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. 17 And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters. 18 When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. 19 And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters. 20 When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. 21 And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters. 22 When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. 23 And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters. 24 When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. 25 And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

The genealogy and descendants of Shem

Now, I'm not going to read this entire genealogy again but I do want to point out some of the important aspects that we should recognize.

1. **Timeframe:** Moses is giving us insight on how much time passed between the flood and the call of Abram.

Shem's genealogy is given in chapter 10 but it's in much more detail here in chapter 11 with the lifespans of the descendants. We can take from this information that the call of Abram happened about 350-400 years after the flood.

2. **Lifespan:** The lifespan of man is getting shorter and shorter.

If you notice at the beginning of the genealogy they are living 500-600 years and by the end they gradually decrease to living around 200 years. This shows us the effect that both the fall and flood had on the earth and humanity.

3. **Messianic Lineage:** The promise of the deliverer from the seed of the woman would be fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, through this lineage.

The reason that Moses focuses on the line of Shem, and not the other two sons of Noah, is because it would be through Shem's line that the Messiah would come. In Luke chapter 3, we get a genealogy of Jesus Christ. It traces Jesus to King David to Abraham to Peleg to Noah, all the way back to the first man Adam.

The genealogy given here in Genesis chapter 11 would be a part of the redemptive lineage of the Messiah who would eventually come to reconcile man back to God.

So this genealogy is not insignificant but it's showing us the **time frame, the lifespan,** and **Messianic Lineage** that is pushing forward God's story of redemptive history.

Now let's go on to the third section in this chapter: **The descendants of Terah and the introduction of Abram.**

VS 26-30 -- 26 When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. 27 Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. 28 Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 29 And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. 32 The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

This is the first mention of Abram, who would later become Abraham. Almost one-third of the book of Genesis focuses on the life of Abraham and he is certainly one of the most influential people in the history of our faith. He was known for his incredible faith and his

trusting in the Lord. It would be through Abraham that all the nations of the world would be blessed.

And because of the way that God used Abraham, to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, we would suspect that He came from a faithful line of followers of Yahweh. But this certainly was not the case.

The text tells us that Abram was born in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans. This was an ancient city in southern Babylonia, this is somewhere around modern day Iraq. We actually get some insight into Abraham's family history and who they worshiped in Joshua 24:2, ***“And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.’”***

So Abraham, the one who would become the father of many nations, through which God would bless His people, came from a family of **idol worshippers**. They were **idolaters**. It's likely that they worshiped the gods of astrology that many people were worshiping at this time.

And I just want to point out here that God will use whomever He pleases to bring about His will. He uses the righteous and He uses the sinful. He uses those who were raised in the knowledge of the Lord and He uses those who come from a long line of wickedness. We oftentimes think, some people are just too far gone to be saved from their sins or that our own past is just too messy for God to use us.

But this isn't at all what we see throughout Scripture and Church History. God turns broken people into beautiful vessels for the furthering of His kingdom. Let us never doubt God's ability to transform hearts and use us for His purposes.

In this text we're also introduced to Lot, the nephew of Abram. It tells us that Lot's father, Haran died unexpectedly so it's likely that Lot is taken in by Abram and we see this later as they go into Canaan together.

Another important aspect of this text is in verse 30, it says, “Now Sarai (the wife of Abram) was barren, she had no child.” This fact would play a huge role in the faith of Abram, as God would promise him that he would become the father of many nations, even before He had children and while his wife was barren.

Abram had to trust God in what seemed like an impossible situation. The name Abram means “exalted father.” So think about how awkward this would have been for him to have this name (to have this promise from God), and yet he was not a father at all.

But God, doing what He does, working in miraculous ways, would later change his name to Abraham, which means “the father of a multitude of nations.” God would not only make him a father, but He would be the father of a people who were countless in number, who all the families of the earth will be blessed through.

Verse 31 tells us that Terah, Abram, his wife Sarai, and Lot all leave their hometown of Ur to go to the land of Canaan. But this raises a question: **Why were they leaving their hometown? Why were they going to Canaan?** Well Stephen tells us in his speech right before his stoning in Acts chapter 7. ***“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia (Ur), before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’”***

So Abram gets the call from God to go to Canaan while he is still in the land of Ur. God wants to give a land to Abram and bring him out of the idolatrous world in Babylonia. But they don’t go all the way do they? The text says that they stop in the land of Haran and settle there.

I want you to notice that this is a form of half-way obedience. He had the call to go to Canaan but instead they stopped and settled on their way in Haran. He knew the Lord’s will but he chose to not fully obey Him. His father Terah ends up dying in Haran, which is interesting because the name Terah means “delay” and the name Haran means “barren or parched.” These two things, delay and barrenness would be two markers of Abram’s life while he remained in partial obedience to God.

Now I want to spend the rest of this message focusing on Verses 1-9: The events at the tower of Babel.

VS1-3 -- 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. 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.

So at this time in the world there was one people group and one language. Once again, this took place at some point during the events in Genesis chapter 10. We know this because of what's said of Nimrod and Peleg and also because chapter 10 mentions different languages and nations.

VS4 -- 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

If you remember back in Genesis chapter 9 verse 1 God gives this command to Noah, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." This is the same command God gave to Adam in Genesis 1:28. But notice what the people at Babel said, "***Let us build a city, a tower, a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.***"

They didn't want to spread out. They didn't want to fill the earth as God had commanded. This is what you call blatant disobedience. Since the beginning of time, man has made the same mistakes over and over and over again. We have this type of spiritual amnesia. We forget what the Lord has done, we turn from Him, and go back to depending on ourselves.

My wife and I have a 1 year old son named Lofton. He's a very smart kid, he picks up on things very quickly (I'm sure all parents believe that about their kids don't they? Whatever, it's my first child so let me believe it). Anyways, even though he's smart, he's still learning, he still makes mistakes.

One thing that He loves to do is while he's on the couch or bed, he will throw his head back really hard on the cushion. He will lean back up and do it again. Well sometimes he's not so aware of what's behind him. And I can't tell you how many times he's hit his head on the headboard or our phone or the computer, something hard that's behind him. And he gets hurt because of this. He makes this same mistake over and over and over.

Is that not a picture of humanity from the beginning of time?

And might I remind you that all of this is taking place during the life of Noah and Shem. These men were on the Ark. This family had experienced the incredible grace of God to spare only their family during the flood and yet it only took a few generations for these people to create all sorts of evil and idol worship again, the very reason that the whole

face of the earth was wiped out. As man, we go on repeating the same mistakes over and over and over.

As I mentioned, the texts seem to suggest that Nimrod was the leader and organizer of this great rebellion but he was not alone in this movement. ***“They said to one another”*** The people were conspiring together against God to build themselves up and create their own world-empire.

The people wanted to build 3 things there in Shinar: **A city, a tower, and a great name for themselves.**

A City -

This construction at Babel was all about human independence and self-sufficiency apart from their Creator. Cities represent protection and security. They wanted a headquarters, a central meeting place, a place where they felt safe and powerful. A place where they wouldn't need God's help. Our rebellion as man is always rooted in pride and the desire to be autonomous from God.

So they wanted to build this city for themselves, in order that they would not be dispersed over the face of the earth, just as God had commanded them.

I want to note here real quick that as a church we need to be aware of this potential pitfall. Our potential temptation may not be to be autonomous from God as a church, but if we're not careful we can fall into the trap of building our own kingdom.

This is why our ARISE initiative to “Build Up & Send Out” is so important. If we just stopped at the building up, we could find ourselves in rebellion towards God. But, not only do we want to equip but we want to fulfill the Great Commission by going and making disciples of all nations: filling the whole earth, with God's people, just as He commanded.

A Tower -

They wanted to build a tower with its top in the heavens. Now, it's not likely that they actually thought they could reach the heavens with their tower but this really speaks to their desire to be seen (to be noticed). They wanted to be known throughout the entire world. They wanted others to be talking about them and their greatness.

This tower they constructed was very likely what was known as a Ziggurat. Ziggurats were common throughout ancient Mesopotamia. They were built with stairways ascending up the tower with a temple or shrine sitting at the very top.

It was believed by those building these Ziggurats that the gods they were worshiping would ascend and descend on this construction making connections with the people. This was the way in which they worshiped their false gods.

This desire to build a tower is closely connected to the third thing they wanted to build which was:

A Great Name For Themselves-

Once again, they were prideful. They wanted the praise of others. They wanted to be known. "Look at us, look at all that we can do, we don't need the help of God."

This was going on thousands of years ago and it's still going on today. Does that not describe the world we live in? Do what makes YOU happy. Do whatever it takes to get YOURS. You are the KING of your own life.

I can't help but to think of what Paul says in Romans chapter 1, this description of mankind from the beginning of creation until now. ***"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools....they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."***

This was the worship of self. The sinful heart of man, produces an inclination in us to create a name for ourselves. This is why Jesus says in order to follow Him, we must DIE to ourselves. The people at the tower of Babel desired their own glory over the glory of God.

In the next 5 verses we get God's response to this construction at Babel:

VS5-6 -- 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

Now this is kind of funny if you think about it... The people are trying to build a tower that reaches the heavens and God says, "let me come down here and see this tower." It's like God is saying, "your tower is so small I have to come all the way down here to see it. You didn't quite reach the heavens." Now, we know that God is omnipresent and is in all places at all times, He didn't have to literally come down to see it. But I think God is showing us the irony of the situation. The foolishness of man.

He also shows that that man being of one language and one people and left to themselves will allow them to create all sorts of wickedness. Think about it, if there was one world-empire what would stop them from mass chaos and evil? Particularly if they have an evil leader like Nimrod, who is a hunter of people. The Lord is pointing out the potential danger if man is left unified in their self-seeking kingdom.

VS7-9 -- 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

So in one single act of God, nations and languages are created throughout the world. Man is dispersed, they can't understand each other, the building of their city is stopped, and God brings down his judgment.

Man would not obey the Lord's command to fill the earth so God intervenes and He forces the spreading upon them. Now, I want you to see that this dispersion and confusion by God was not only punishment upon the people but it was actually a form of grace. It had a two-fold purpose.

Yes, God was punishing the people for their rebellion but more importantly He was protecting them from their own destruction. Think about where the most crime and evil takes place in our society. It happens in the large cities where there is the most population and people are gathered closely together.

Think about what happens when one man gets too much power: great evil occurs. Nimrod, Pharaoh, King Herod, Stalin, Hitler. If there were no checks and balances and not other people and groups to stop these dictators, evil would abound even more. God scatters the people to protect them for themselves.

God is putting a restraint on the evil of man by confusing their language and dispersing them throughout the earth. Think about what would have happened if God would have left them to themselves. Not only that, but I want to make it more personal: What if God would have left you to yourself, in your sin?

I think about my life before Christ, the direction I was headed. Following the course of the world, seeking after the approval of man. I was prideful, I was rebellious. I claimed to know God, but wasn't following His ways. Like the people at Babel, I wanted to make a name for myself more than make a name for God. I wanted to be seen, I wanted to be noticed, I wanted to be liked. I was no different than them.

What if God would have left me there? What if He would not have intervened in my life? I would still be dead in my sins and trespasses. If you are in Christ this morning, praise God that He did not leave you to yourself. He rescued you from the pits of hell. He changed the direction of your life. God is in the business of transformation.

And if you're here this morning and you don't know Christ. There is hope because of the gospel. It doesn't matter where you've been, it doesn't matter what you've done. The Scriptures tell us that God is faithful to forgive those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus for their salvation. God takes broken individuals and turns them into beautiful vessels for His glory.

Come to Him today. Stop building up your own name and your own tower and trust in the One who can truly provide access to the Father.

3 Takeaways:

1. We must recognize our sinfulness and our need for God.

At the tower of Babel, we see the pride of man and the desire to be autonomous from the Creator. In order to be saved from our sins, we must first recognize our sinfulness and our need for the atonement of Jesus.

Romans 3 tells us that ***“none is righteous, no, not one, no one understands; no one seeks for God.”*** Ephesians 2 says, ***“we are dead in our trespasses and sins.”***

It's impossible to be in relationship with God without first dying to self and recognizing your need for a savior.

2. Jesus is the true and only pathway into heaven.

I want to contrast for a moment the tower of Babel and what the Scriptures teach about getting to heaven. The tower of Babel, had a stairway, a ladder in a sense, to attempt to reach the heavens.

In Genesis 28, Jacob has a dream of a ladder with its top in the heavens (sounds familiar doesn't it?). In this dream angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder and God reiterates the covenant that He gave to his grandfather Abraham, that He would give them a land and their descendants would fill the earth.

Now watch this, in John chapter 1, when Jesus calls Nathaniel to be his disciple he tells him, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*** What Jesus is saying here is that He is the true ladder. He is the only One who can give access to the Father.

Have you recognized your inability to be considered righteous before God on your own merit?

Are you attempting to build your own ladder like the people at Babel or have you placed your faith in Jesus, the true ladder, who will gladly give access to all those who trust in Him?

3. From Genesis to Revelation, God is working out His plan of redemption through peoples and languages.

I want you to see this connection of what God does throughout history through our different languages. Here in Genesis 11, God “comes down” (as the text says), confuses the people’s language, and spreads different people groups throughout the world. As I mentioned earlier this was a form of punishment, but also a form of common grace for the protection of mankind.

When we get to the early church in Acts chapter 2. God “comes down” again in the form of the Holy Spirit and indwells His people at Pentecost bringing order to their language. At Pentecost, The Holy Spirit fills the people and they are able to understand each other in their own languages. There were people from many different groups and yet they all understood the mighty works of God.

We see from this event that the gospel, the mighty works of God, the language of praise transcends linguistic boundaries. And I believe this event was just a taste as to what is to come at the consummation of the Lord in His heavenly Kingdom.

At Babel He confused. At Pentecost He brought temporary order. Now look what He does in heaven:

Revelation 7:9-12 -- 9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

There will be a day in heaven, when the people of God will all discern each other's language again. The language of praise in heaven before the throne of God. Order will be permanent. We may see the thousands of languages today as a barrier to spread the gospel, but what a beautiful promise we have that this message of salvation will transcend these barriers and be proclaimed to all the earth.

Let us not build our own kingdom but let us seek to build the Kingdom of God and fulfill the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations and all languages, being a picture as to what is to come in heaven.

REVIEW:

- ❖ Read Genesis chapter 11.
- ❖ What are some of the things we learn from verses 10-25?
- ❖ What was significant about where Abraham came from (Joshua 24:2)?
- ❖ What is the significance of Abram's name meaning, "exalted father" and the new name, Abraham, that God gives him?
- ❖ How do we see the disobedience of the people in verse 2?
- ❖ What are the three things they were seeking to build in verse 4? What were they actually trying to accomplish?
- ❖ How do we see discipline and protection in God's judgment in verses 7-9?

REFLECT:

- ❖ In what ways are you building your own kingdom?
- ❖ How have you seen God's discipline and protection in your life?

RESPOND:

- ❖ Is God trying to lead you in a particular direction?
- ❖ Are you being obedient or disobedient?
- ❖ What steps can you take to be obedient?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Genesis 11:4 -- *Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ John 14:6 -- *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Kids Pastor - **Nick Judd**
- ❖ Ministry - **Kids Ministry**
- ❖ **Pray for our long-term families:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks (departing in October)
- ❖ **Pray for our mid-term sent ones:**
 - Abby & Katherine (gap year - returning in August)
 - Kaesi (gap year - departing in August)
- ❖ **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia team departs in September
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Aray Mala in India**
 - **Population in country:** 5,000
 - **Global population:** 5,000
 - **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
 - **Evangelical:** 0.00%
 - **Primary Religion:** Hinduism
 - **Primary Language:** Telugu
 - **Summary:** The small Aray Mala people group is scattered throughout India's states of Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. They are a subgroup of the greater Mala peoples and are beneath the four major Hindu caste groupings, which mean they have very low status.

- **Prayer Focus:** No true churches are known to exist among Aray Mala people in India. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give the Aray Mala people teachable and understanding hearts. Pray for sustained, focused prayer to the Lord to open the hearts of Aray Mala family leaders to experience God's blessing through family-based discovery Bible studies.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App
<https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>