

GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

The Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel

God's command to Noah after the Flood:

"But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it." (Genesis 9:7 CSB)

This reminds us of ...

The conclusion of the "Table of Nations":

These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood. (Genesis 10:32 CSB)

The "Table of Nations" (a brief overview):

This is what became of Shem, Ham, and Japheth after the flood (v.1).

1. The descendants of Japheth settled in the north and west and became the founders of the Greek and Scythian tribes (2–5).
2. The descendants of Ham settled in the area of Egypt and Canaan, and from these tribes came the founders of the great cities of the east (6–20).
 - a. The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan (6).
 - b. The descendants of Cush were the people of the Arabian peninsula (7).
 - c. Nimrod founded the great cities of the east (8–12).
 - d. The descendants of Mizraim were the tribes of northern Africa (13–14).
 - e. Canaan produced the Canaanite tribes in the land promised to Israel (15–20).
3. The descendants of Shem, the ancestor of Eber, settled in the eastern lands and in the region of the Persian Gulf (21–31).
 - a. The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram (21–22).
 - b. The descendants formed the major tribes of the eastern gulf regions (23–31).

Significance to us:

1. We are _____ race.
2. The human race is hopelessly _____ by language, ethnicity, territory, and politics, etc.
3. This human division – _____ by God – is part of His purpose for blessing and cursing.

"The human race, although united by origin, is divided by language, territory, and politics as a part of God's design to bring blessing to the human race." (Allen P. Ross)

Babel (Babylon) and how we got where we are:

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

⁴Then 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."

⁵And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶And 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.

⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."

⁸So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore 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.

Genesis 11:1-9

More than meets the eye ...

From the *Enuma Elish*, tablet 6, lines 55–65:

When Marduk heard this,

Brightly glowed his features, like the day:

"Construct Babylon, whose building you have requested,

Let its brickwork be fashioned. You shall name it 'The Sanctuary'."

The Anunnaki applied the implement;

For one whole year they molded bricks.

When the second year arrived,

They raised high the head of Esagila equaling Apsu.

Having built a stage-tower as high as Apsu,

They set up in it an abode for Marduk, Enlil, [and] Ea.

In their presence he was seated in grandeur.

4 connections:

1. A tower for the sanctuary of the gods, (with Genesis reporting the determination to build the tower and city in rebellion against God);
2. the lofty elevation of its peak into the heavens, and ...
3. the making of the bricks before the building of the city ...
4. The great pride of the builders. (Babylon = Gate of the Gods)

Genesis 11 separates (Babylonian) myth and legend from the truth of God's sovereign plan.

From Umberto Cassuto's *Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 2, pp. 229–30:

"You, children of Babylon ... you called your city Babel — Bâbili, "Gate of god," or Bâb-ilani "Gate of the gods" — and your tower you designated "House of the foundation of heaven and earth." You desired that the top of your tower should be in heaven.... you did not understand that, even if you were to raise the summit of your ziggurat ever so high, you would not be nearer to Him than when you stand upon the ground; nor did you comprehend that He who in truth dwells in heaven, if He wishes to take a closer look at your lofty tower, must needs come down.... Your intention was to build for yourselves a gigantic city that would contain all mankind and you forgot that it was God's will to fill the whole earth with human settlements, and that God's plan would surely be realized.... You were proud of your power, but you should have known that it is forbidden to man to exalt himself, for only the Lord is truly exalted, and the pride of man is regarded by Him as iniquity that leads to his downfall and degradation — a punishment befitting the crime.... On account of this, your dominion was shattered and your families were scattered over the face of the whole earth. Behold, how fitting is the name that you have given to your city! It is true that in your language it expresses glory and pride, but in our idiom it sounds as though it connoted confusion—the confusion of tongues heard therein, which caused its destruction and the dispersion of its inhabitants in every direction."

" _____ " becomes a _____ of every city, kingdom, or people that exalts itself against God.

It was at Babel — that city founded by Nimrod, a descendant of Ham through Cush; that city known for its pride and vanity; that seat of rebellion toward the true God and pagan worship of the false gods — that the Lord turned ingenuity and ambition into chaos and confusion so that the thing the people feared most came on them and that their desire to be people of renown was suddenly turned against them. For the Israelite nation the lesson was clear: If she was to survive as a nation, she must obey God's will, for the nation that bristles with pride and refuses to obey will be scattered. The account of the scattering at Babel thus has a theological significance for God's people.

The Theology of Babel:

They wanted to build the ultimate _____.

They wanted to build a _____.

They wanted to _____.

They wanted _____ and _____.

The cycle of _____ and _____ continues (as it will throughout the Old Testament). But the clear reality is this: Mankind will never _____/_____ without _____!

Just a few years after the Flood, and humankind is right back to where we were – at odds with God.

We are still " _____ " ... the human condition is _____.

God's Sovereignty in Scattering:

1. God will always _____.
2. God will _____ the _____ of man.
3. God's _____ (and goodness) extends to the _____.
4. One day, the _____ will go out to _____ people
5. Christ will one day be _____ among _____ nations.

Next week: **Abram**