

We are beginning Genesis 11 which is related to chapter 10. Isaiah 66, the last chapter is Millennial,

66.18 *“For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.* Reference to nations and tongues—and ‘see my glory’ makes it millennial.

19 *“I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations:* The assumption is that there will be some individuals that come out of these nations. We notice that these cities, who are descendants of all three of Noah’s sons represented by these nations that are listed in a millennial passage:

*Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Rosh, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.*

Hence the relevance of Genesis 10. The nations are also referenced in Revelation 5, 20, 21 and 22—and in many places.

The nations are an important part of God’s dealing with humanity, and have a place in the program of God. And today we are looking at their origin.

This is the broad plan of God: from the Biblical viewpoint. And the Biblical record gives us foundations for World History

## World History

We looked at the Creation, the beginning, which was a very good creation until sin entered.

The second major event in world history is the Fall of man that changed everything—including the creation although theologians tend to focus on the effects on mankind and the fact that, after sin entered, all descendants of Adam and Eve have a fallen nature. Certainly that is the main emphasis of all of Scripture, but in the context I tried to develop the idea that the creation itself or the natural realm was affected—and we live in a fallen natural realm today, so it is a foundation to all of world history.

And God deals with sin by separating that that He loves from that that is destroying. So we have early on, not only the judgment on Adam and Eve, but we have the Genesis Flood after several generations and descendants from Adam and Eve. The intervening chapters give us some of the descendants of Adam and Eve. And because sin reaches its full effects, God intervenes and preserves those that He loves, the family of Noah and the animals that were on the Ark. As I have also said, everything was changed as a result of the Flood and we live in a post-Flood world that is regulated by the Noahic Covenant.

And now we are going to look at another major event and another major change in the dealings of mankind. I call it the Scattering because that is the main emphasis. Or you can call it the Dispersing of peoples. It results in the nations with whom God will deal throughout world history all the way even into the eternal state. This is the Biblical or inspired record; but the secularist does not have a good explanation for the origin of the nations.

Obviously the nations exist in our time so we are living amongst nations, and God has a plan and a program for the nations even in the future.

A summary of the first 9 verses of chapter 11:



**Scattering**

1. Essence - Rebellion
 

Another rebellion—we emphasized one with Adam and Eve, and several rebellions that God deals with, like the Genesis flood. And now at the heart of this story is another rebellion that we will see in the first few verses of the chapter.

Judgment

And, it is another judgment—God intervening and dealing with mankind to sovereignly accomplish the purposes and goals that He has, and in part of that process He will also establish the whole concept of nations.
2. Pivot - Blessing
 

And we could view this chapter as somewhat of a pivot point in the development of the book of Genesis, God dealing with mankind with a broad, general sense. Obviously there are individuals in the genealogy, but in the latter part of chapter 11 and the next part of Genesis, we are going to move to the people that God has called to Himself and on whom He will bestow *blessings*. And we have the nation of Israel, the father being Abraham. God will deal with a particular people.
3. Nations - Cause
 

The scattering is a pivot point from all the nations to a particular nation, Israel. And that focus, I think, the rest of Scripture will deal with, including even the church age in which the nation of Israel will have a part. I often say that World History is Jewish and we have the transition to that nation as a result of this major event. So the nations, their origin and what caused their beginning, we will see in the first 9 verses of chapter 11.
4. Background - Babylon
 

Also, looking forward, we have the background to Babylon which is also the focus of this passage, in the form of Babel which will have an important part in history as well. It was the major enemy that destroyed the nation of Israel later on in history.

5. Time - ~100-300 years
 

In terms of the time frame, in chapter 10 there was a little passage that tells us that ‘in the days of Peleg the earth was divided’ which we interpreted as probably referring to chapter 11. It is not clear—not a geological division but a division of *peoples*. And if you count the number of years, using the latter part of chapter 11 with the ages of individuals, you learn that Peleg was born about 100 years after the flood and lived over 300 years. And if that is the accurate interpretation of that little phrase in chapter 10, referring to the Tower of Babel and the scattering of peoples, then the timeframe would be about 100 years.

I would put it closer to the time of Peleg’s birth because there is a very, very short time between the Tower of Babel and the coming of Abraham. In fact, almost all archeology says that the time was much longer; they put a lot of time between the first civilizations, the Sumerians, and the timeframe of Abraham. Biblically this is the timeframe the Bible gives us and there is no reason to deviate from it.

The context: we are getting close to the end of Primeval History:

- |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. Primeval History              | 1.1-11.26                |
| A. History of the Creation       | 1.1-2.3                  |
| B. Early History of Mankind      | 2.4-3.24                 |
| C. Early History of Civilization | 4-9 (the Flood/Judgment) |
| D. Early History of the Nations  | 10-11                    |
| 1. Origin of the Nations         | 10 (Table of Nations)    |
| 2. Scattering of the Nations     | 11.1-26                  |
| a. Decline of the People         | 11.1-4                   |
| 1) Unity of People               | 11.1-2                   |

In 11.1-4 there is a focus on People, and in the last part, 5-9, a focus on the Lord and His intervening as a result of this decline.

And the decline involves Unity of the People. Unity in itself is a good thing, but behind *this* unity is a bad thing which we will comment on.

11.1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

This is setting the stage for what God is going to do, and the problem is not with the language and/or the words, but it calls attention to it to focus on this unity. So there is a unified culture with a unified language—and we will see in the next verse a unified *purpose* or *will*. And it is ‘unified’; in the next verses we see that it is unified in *opposition* to clear revelation of God.

But the whole earth used the same language and the same words. I think that ‘language’ probably refers to the grammar or structure, the language in general. In fact the word that is used in other contexts to the different languages that will occur later on.

Literally the word is ‘lip’; people have the same ‘lip’, *shafah* being the Hebrew word. In some verses it refers to the ‘lip’, but it here is referring to what comes out or through your lips—speech or language. We might have an emphasis perhaps on the grammatical structure because the next word, *dahbar*, also Hebrew, refers to words or word. It might be vocabulary, so we have a particular vocabulary structured in a particular way that is representative of *language*. And all languages have their particular structure or grammar and along with all the vocabulary that is different, might have similar sounds, but the meanings are radically different, depending on the language. They are structured in different ways.

### Word Play

1. Language - *shafah* = lip
2. Words - *dahbar* = words

It is thought that the original language that is referred to in verse 1— the whole earth used the same language and the same words—could have been Hebrew. The Pentateuch was written in Hebrew, and there are examples of Word Play in this passage—which we don’t see in English. There are several plays on words that only work in the Hebrew; in any other language there is no word play. I will give you some of the examples in chapter 11.

In fact structurally and linguistically in a literary way this is a masterpiece; it is a wonderful passage and some of that you can see in the Word Play and in the way it is structured—I will bring out some of the structure as well, but the Word Plays only work in the Hebrew. It’s not conclusive, but may indicate to us that this is the one language. There is no other language suggested by the scholars.

But the point of the passage is that ‘the whole earth used the *same* language and the *same* words’—very different from the rest of world history.

11.2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

There are several references to the ‘east’. Oftentimes directions in Scripture are with respect to Jerusalem, particularly later on when it is the center of the nation of Israel. But in these early verses, particularly in Genesis, it seems to carry an interesting connotation. Some of the commentators mention this.

It is somewhat incidental in the context, but as you see it over and over and over, it begins to perhaps follow a pattern. In Genesis, most of the statements that are made, some seem incidental, but they seem to be purposeful as well; they are not random or incidental per se. In these early chapters possibly it seems like that that goes *east*, goes *away* or is outside the blessing of the Lord.

## Outside Blessing                      Genesis

### 1. Out of Garden -                      3.24

The first example is when Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden. *So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.* So you have an example of Adam and Eve cast out with a reference to *east* of the garden.

### 2. Cain settles -                      4.16

In chapter 4:16 *Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

### 3. Lot chooses Sodom -                      13.10-12

11: *Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.* So Abraham was on the west side of Jordan and Lot chose the *east* side of the Jordan.

### 4. Keturah's sons -                      25.6

After Sara dies, there is a separation of the sons of Keturah from the blessed one or the one that God is going to use: Isaac.

*6 but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.*

### 5. Jacob flees -                      29.1

*Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.* After Jacob deceives Esau and essentially steals the birthright from Esau; and there is a problem in the family and Jacob has to flee. It is northeast of Israel, but the reference is '*to the land of the sons of the east.*

### 6. Babel -                      11.2

Now, in verse 2, the note: *It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.* Another passage not of blessing but actually of judgment.

So it seems to be, at least in the early chapters of Genesis, to flee the blessings of God.

11.2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. Here is a map with Ararat where the Ark settled:

Shinar would be south of Ararat as seen on the slide, and we don't



know where they wandered after leaving the Ark, but Shinar is in fact *east* of *Jerusalem*. So whether it is *from the east* or *to the east*, Shinar is east of the land of Israel (not the land of Israel yet, but after the conquest).

We have seen before that Shinar is part of the Fertile Crescent. Archeologists see that Shinar is the place where culture developed. The archeologists make a big deal out of the Sumerians because they seem to be the earliest culture that we know of archeologically. But Biblically they would have had to come *after* the incident here in chapter 11.

I have mentioned that there are many contrasts that we will see throughout the passage. These are the major ones:

## Contrasts in Genesis 11

- > Plans of Man (1-4)                      > Will of God (5-9)

A broad contrast is the Plans of Man, verses 1-4, in contrast to the will of God, 5-9.

- > 1 language (1)                      > Confused (7,9)

Verse 1 emphasizes the one language and the passage will end with the confusing of the languages—so there are multiple languages now.

- > Come ... (3,4)                      > Come ... (7)

And, interestingly we have the word ‘come’ in reference to calling the people together, verses 3-4. And then the same word is used in reference to God, God calling, similar to what we had in Genesis 1. ‘Come, let us...’ in verse 7.

And, by the way, the *structure* is not only *alternating*, but it is a chiasmic structure—a literary device that presents a series of ideas, and then repeats them in opposite order.

- > Spoke to each (3)                      > No understanding (7)

They spoke to each other and then ended up with no understanding in verse 7.

- > Human action (3-4)                      > Divine action (8)

3 and 4 give us the human action in contrast to the divine action in verse 8.

- > Reach Heaven (4)                      > Down from Heaven (5)

They built a tower reaching into the heavens which from man’s perspective is huge, reaching up to God, but it is so puny que God has to come down to even see it! That is an anthropomorphism, but the text emphasizes it.

- > Make name (4)                      > Named Babel (9)

They determine to make a name for themselves by building this tower, and God ends up by making a name for them, but the name is not a positive one—Babel.

- > Lest scattering (4)                      > Lord Scattered (8,9)

They do this lest they be *scattered*—and that is the issue. The issue is not that one language is bad, not that unity is bad, the

issue is not that engineering or construction is bad or even the building of a city or of a tower—that’s not the problem. The problem is lest they be scattered, that is, in total violation of what God had revealed and commanded—both Adam and later on Noah. This is in contrast to the Lord scattering them.

This brings them to the first implications that we can draw, at least from the first 2 verses.

## Implications

1. Unity against God —> globalism

This unity is a unity against God—and that is the issue, the problem. They are united against God Himself. This kind of lays the foundation you might say from the negative perspective to things that are going to recur throughout world history. There seems to be a desire in man to unite against God and ultimately globalism is one of the issues that will come into play not only throughout history, but it will be a major issue in the *future*—the issue of globalism.

We could talk about at length the trends we have in the culture today that are all going in that direction of globalism, setting the stage for the last days and the Great Tribulation where globalism will take its greatest illustration in the future. The book of Revelation makes a big point of that.

So here you have the roots and the foundation where man is united together with a purpose that goes against what God has designed. Unity in itself is not bad; in fact, *true unity* comes from God and *real unity* can only be found in Him, but unity that goes *against Him* is certainly condemned in Scripture.

2. God’s command -                      opposite

We will see that this kind of unity goes against God’s clear command—which is in Genesis 1 and repeated in chapter 9.1:

God desires that man multiply, be fruitful and fill the earth and rule the earth. ‘fill the earth’ requires that man spread out after multiplying, developing families and family groups, but they are not to stay together. So this goes totally against the Genesis 1 *mandate* and then it is repeated in 9 to Noah, that they are also to ‘fill the earth’. So they leave the Ark and multiply, but several years later we have Genesis 11 and man is determined to do the very opposite of what God commanded—and that is the main issue we have in Genesis 11.

D. Early History of the Nations	10-11
1. Origin of the Nations	10
2. Scattering of the Nations	11.1-26
a. Decline of the People	11.1-4
1) Unity of People	11.1-2
2) Rebellion of People	11.3-4

So that is the unity of the people and evidence of the rebellion of the people is in verses 3 and 4.

11.3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

They are speaking to one another in that unified language. We said that it is possible, in chapter 10, that emphasis is given to Nimrod. Some scholars believe that he perhaps is the organizer and the leader and a totalitarian king over the peoples and maybe these are his words. We don’t know conclusively, but somebody announces:

Come, let us make bricks. Now there is nothing wrong with technology or the making of bricks or construction materials or building things, but the emphasis is for the purpose of doing the very opposite of what God has designed.

In the Fertile Crescent, in the Tigris-Euphrates river valley, present-day Iraq, there are no stone quarries, like the children of Israel would have been familiar with in Egypt, nor those later on in their history in the land of Israel where there is limestone block and many of the structures are made out of limestone. These are ‘adobes’, you might say; they are mud bricks that were made and were more common in that area which is confirmed by the archeology of finding not only these bricks but the structures that were built in ancient times.

And we have another major word play here in the description of the bricks.

### Word Play

1. Language - *shafah* = lip
2. Words - *dahbar* = words
3. Bricks - “Come, let us brick bricks”  
(*nabah neelbenah lebenim*)

Literally, if you have the transliteration into English, you can see similarities in the letters that repeat themselves. It is pretty deliberate; and if you listen you can hear the similarity: *nabah neelbenah lebenim*. *Lebah* is ‘brick’ and *lebenim* is bricks, so literally “Come, let us brick bricks”, the word emphasized in a verb form and in a noun form. If you read it you can hear the similarity of the letters kind of repeating themselves.

As I said, the emphasis will be the will of God that will be contrasted, in verse 5, with the 1 language that is confused. Then the word ‘come’ is repeated in verse 7—except that it is God that uses the word.

### Contrasts in Genesis 11

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| > Spoke to each (3)  | > No understanding (7) |

And we will see that the understanding is going to be changed in the next two verses, beginning verse 3.

11.3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

Then we have a further aspect: “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” The English tries to get the sense of it, but if you go to the Hebrew, you see another word play...

### Word Play

1. Language - *shafah* = lip
2. Words - *dahbar* = words
3. Bricks - “Come, let us brick bricks”  
(*nabah neelbenah lebenim*)
4. Burn - “and burn to a burning”  
(*venishrefah lishrefah*)

burn them thoroughly. It is somewhat a similar construction to play on the words, to kind of emphasize the statement. The idea is “burn to a burning”, a literal way of translating it. I think this translation ‘burn thoroughly’ is accurate. It is an infinitive absolute. Notice again, if you pronounce it: *ven-ish-re-fah lish-re-fah*. You can see clearly the similarity in sound to emphasize this construction technique, you might say; that is, they were making bricks and burning them in a furnace to make them hard, like stone, and that is part of their plan to build a tower.

11.3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

Remember, he is writing to the children of Israel who would not be familiar—they had been in Egypt for hundreds of years—

with mesopotamia. I think the writing of Genesis is before the Exodus—it’s not clear, it doesn’t say anywhere, but it makes more sense to me that the children of Israel were in Egypt when Genesis was written because of little indicators like this: Moses is interpreting for them, they used brick for stone because in mesopotamia they don’t have rock quarries like they would in Egypt. And it also gives the added note they used tar for mortar which is very common; in fact oil products in that area were very common so they would have used tar for mortar in order to cement the bricks together.

So we have a description of the construction materials and some of the techniques that were used in order to build a structure that is explained in verse 4.

11.4 They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

They said, “Come, again, a second time, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven. Another unifying statement of gathering all the people for the purpose of building a city—again, the building of cities in itself is not evil or bad. Jerusalem will come down from heaven as a city, and even before, Revelation 21, God leaves His name in the city and it is *His* city. There is lots of emphasis on Jerusalem throughout the OT.

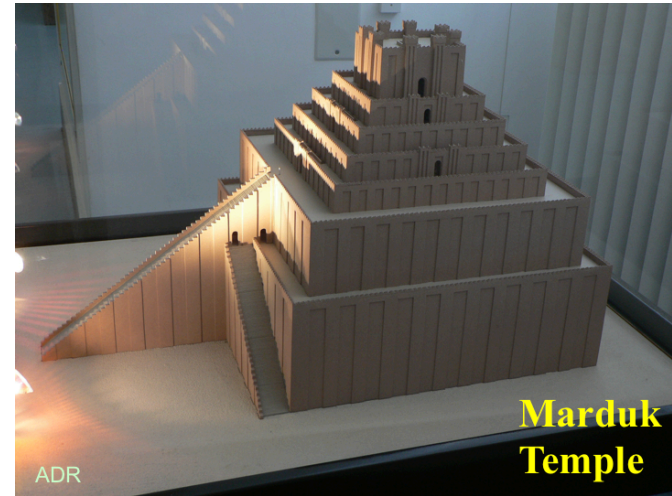
The passage will lead us to what the evil is. Even the building of a tower—with the motivation that the top will reach into heaven. Man’s effort to reach God, historically in high places, and towers were used to satisfy the gods of all the pagan nations; there is evidence of that in Israel and other parts of the world. And that seems to hint at, if not overtly, the purpose here. It’s man-made religion; that is, man rebelling against God and creating their own way of approaching God—building a tower.

You might even say: using *technology* to build something that reaches out to God.

And, archeologically there are the remains of the structures that perhaps are the after effects of the original tower—this is not the tower necessarily but some archeologists feel that what they have found in Babylon, maybe on the site or it may be the tower, but a later reconstruction of a tower. This one has a base of 270 feet on each side and they estimate the height would have been about 297 feet.



This is a reconstruction at Babylon and theologians, taking the archeological remains, have reconstructed what they believe has been described in some of the literature as the temple of Marduk—you can see the similarity in this reconstruction. This is probably a model of the temple of Marduk at Babylon:



And archeologists at Ur have found such a Ziggurat that is very similar. There is a photo with people to give you a perspective of the size of it. So this is an actual archeological site; similar sites have been found at Babylon and several other sites in Iraq.



All of the pagan cultures try to reach God in different ways, but they always are 'dead ends'. According to Romans 1, they all have enough revelation to seek the one true God.



So verse 4 goes on...

11.4 They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

...let us make for ourselves a name. There is the motivation: it’s not a seeking of God, it’s not an active obedience to God but it’s a self-centered, prideful desire to make a name for themselves. Again, in our contrast we have human action trying to make a name with a tower reaching to heaven.

### Contrasts in Genesis 11

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| > Plans of Man (1-4) | > Will of God (5-9)    |
| > 1 language (1)     | > Confused (7,9)       |
| > Come ... (3,4)     | > Come ... (7)         |
| > Spoke to each (3)  | > No understanding (7) |
| > Human action (3-4) | > Divine action (8)    |
| > Reach Heaven (4)   | > Down from Heaven (5) |
| > Make name (4)      | > Named Babel (9)      |

Later on we’ll have God coming down from heaven and God is going to give them a name but it will be an infamous name rather than a great name that they desire.

11.4 They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Then the passage ends with verse 4: otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. So it’s a conscious rebellion against the will of God. It is clearly against

Genesis 9.1 where the children of Noah and Noah were commanded to fill the earth and here it is the total opposite—the opposite of what was given in the Creation Mandate to Adam and Eve as well.

That is the problem. It is not the building of a city or a tower, not having a unified idea or a desire for unity, but it’s unity in total rebellion against God.

And we see the contrast: it’s the Lord scattering them.

### Contrasts in Genesis 11

- |                       |                        |
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| > Reach Heaven (4)    | > Down from Heaven (5) |
| > Make name (4)       | > Named Babel (9)      |
| > Lest scattering (4) | > Lord Scattered (8,9) |

### Implications

1. Unity against God —> globalism
2. God’s command - opposite
3. Technology substitutes

Another implication we can draw is that technology in itself is not bad; we use it in many ways to help us—but the evil is substituting or using technology as a substitute for God’s will, or a substitute trying to find fulfillment and trying to set goals that are contrary to God using technology. So in the passage technology is brought out in the building materials of the tower and the tower itself.

So there is a good application for our culture. Some people use technology in our culture—preoccupied with their phones,

things on the internet or television, but like anything else, the things of the the natural realm are not in and of themselves evil—it's how we use them and the priority we put upon them.

D. Early History of the Nations	10-11
1. Origin of the Nations	10
2. Scattering of the Nations	11.1-26
a. Decline of the People	11.1-4
b. Judgment of the Lord	11.5-9
1) Evaluation	11.5-6

The next passage is the contrasting passage, chapters 5-9, and we will talk about the judgment of the Lord which we will see in 7-9.

God is sovereign over man's volition and actions! So man has a plan...remember the Proverb 'man makes his plans, but God directs him'. So God will override the designs or plans of man in order to accomplish His will, and that will involve not only His plans but His actions. That is a good thing because the plans that oftentimes *we* make are not beneficial either in the long term nor even in the short term. Satan is behind all the plans that man makes once he has rejected the true God.