

The Tower of Babel and the Generations of Shem

Genesis 11:1-32

- I. THE UNITY OF THE PEOPLE AFTER THE FLOOD (Genesis 11:1-6)
 - A. A Universal Language (Genesis 11:1)
 1. A requirement to have a one world government
 2. Many Bible students believe that this language as well as the heavenly language was/is Hebrew.
 - a. Hebrew was the language that Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:14).
 - b. It seems to be the language of saints in Heaven (Revelation 19:1-6) – *Alleluia* is a Hebrew word.
 - c. If it was the language of Adam, it would be quite possible that it was preserved through Noah down to Abraham.
 3. The kingdom (1,000-year reign of Christ) will be a time when everyone will speak one, pure, universal language (Zephaniah 3:9).
 - B. A Universal Government (Genesis 11:2-4)
 1. Their central location (Genesis 11:2)
 - a. They journeyed from the east – (See Appendix 1, pg. I)
 - b. They found a plain in the land of Shinar
 - (1) They settled there
 - (2) Building a city (Genesis 11:4, 5)
 - (a) A city is the stage at which government rises above extended family government. It is the basis for all larger government. Cain left the presence of the Lord and his parents and built a city (Genesis 4:16-17).
 - (b) From the city came the beginnings of civilization (Genesis 4:20-22).
 - (3) Building for themselves – To stay in one place (Genesis 11:4)
 - (a) In direct rebellion to God’s command.
 - (b) They were to scatter and replenish the earth.
 - (4) “The land of Shinar” – the later place of the city, nation and empire of Babylon.
 - (a) Babel (Genesis 11:9) becomes Babylon.
 - (b) Through-out scripture Babylon is a picture of the one-world government.

- i. The first Babel (in our context here) was built by Nimrod as the beginning of his kingdom (Genesis 10:8-10).
 - ii. Prophetically, Babylon points to the future one-world kingdom and its wickedness.
 - 1) Wickedness goes to build a house in the land of Shinar in the prophecy of Zechariah (Zechariah 5:5-11).
 - 2) Also, notice its prominence in the book of Revelation (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).
2. Their building materials (Genesis 11:3)
 - a. Brick
 - (1) Made by themselves
 - (2) Made by burning thoroughly in the fire
 - (3) Used in place of stone
 - b. Slime in place of mortar
 - c. Materials of substitutions
 - (1) They used brick in the place of stone – a man made material in place of a God given one.
 - (2) They used slime in place of mortar – an inferior material in place of a sound one.
 - (3) This world builds its civilization using many kinds of substitutions.
 - (a) Man has substitutes for God.
 - i. Movie stars
 - ii. Sports stars
 - iii. Political figures
 - iv. Careers
 - (b) Man has substitutes for the Bible (Authority).
 - i. Evolutionism
 - ii. Marxism
 - iii. Socialism
 - iv. Education
 - v. Political authorities
 - (c) Man has many substitutes for righteousness.
 - i. Rewriting of what's right and wrong.
 - ii. Calling good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20; Jeremiah 4:22; 13:10).
3. Their anti-God rule (Genesis 11:3-4) – a government of self-promotion and self-will.
 - a. Let **us** make brick (Genesis 11:3)
 - b. Let **us** build **us** a city and a tower (Genesis 11:4)
 - c. Let **us** make **us** a name (Genesis 11:4)
 - d. Lest **we** be scattered (Genesis 11:4)
 - e. In these two verses we find the word **us** five times and the word **we** one time.

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- C. A Universal Religion (Genesis 11:4)
1. To build a tower
 2. Whose top may reach to Heaven
 3. A of the world's religions are based on works
 - a. They were building the tower.
 - b. They were doing the work.
 - c. All religions are based on works.
 - (1) This will one day be the uniting factor in the one-world religion.
 - (2) Man tries to establish his own righteousness (Romans 10:2-4).
 4. A religion based on man's initiative.
 - a. They were reaching up to heaven.
 - b. They were not responding to God's word to them. If they had, they would have scattered across the face of the world without God confounding their language (Genesis 9:1).
 - c. Man wants a religion that originated with his own plans (2 Kings 5:11), and man's desire to bring God down to his own level (Romans 1:23).
- D. A Universal Goal (Genesis 11:4)
1. To make them a name (Psalm 49:11).
 - a. The desire of man has many times been so great that he is willing to join forces in a cause (Psalm 2:2; Proverbs 11:21; Isaiah 28:15).
 - b. These "causes" have been varied from building pyramids to sending men into space.
 2. To avoid being scattered abroad and separated from the power of numbers (Genesis 11:4).
 3. The power of numbers – man united has the power to accomplish enormous tasks.
 - a. This truth is recognized by God – He knows that "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11:6).
 - b. The problem is that man does not have the morality to do the right thing (Psalm 103:3-11; Romans 3:10-18). – The greater the power, the greater the wickedness.
 - c. God must eventually restrain man, as He will again do at the end of the tribulation.

II. THE SCATTERING OF THE PEOPLE (Genesis 11:5-9)

- A. God's View of Their Work (Genesis 11:5-6)
1. The Lord came down (Genesis 11:5)
 - a. To see the city
 - b. To see the tower
 - c. To see what mankind had built
 2. The Lord considered their actions (Genesis 11:6)
 - a. Their unity

- (1) The people are one
 - (2) They have all one language
 - b. Their potential
 - (1) This is just the beginning
 - (2) Now nothing will be restrained from them
 - (3) They will do all their imagination. Note: We have already seen what man does with his imagination in the first two references to the word (Genesis 6:5; 8:21).
- B. The Confounding of Their Language (Genesis 11:7)
- 1. The decision to come down
 - a. Go to
 - b. Let us go down – (a reference to the Trinity) – (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; Isaiah 6:8; 1 John 5:7).
 - 2. The decision to defeat their plans
 - a. Let us confound their language
 - b. Let us make it so that they do not understand one another
 - 3. The scattering abroad of the people (Genesis 11:8)
 - a. The LORD had to bring judgment and scatter them abroad
 - b. The people ceased the building of the city
 - c. In comparison, the early church was supposed to separate and would not until the Lord allowed persecution to arise (Acts 1:8; 8:1).
 - 4. The naming of the city (Genesis 11:9)
 - a. The city was named Babel.
 - b. Because there the LORD confounded the language of all the earth.
 - c. From there the people were scattered over all the earth.

III. THE GENERATIONS OF SHEM (Genesis 11:10-26)

- A. From Shem to Eber (Genesis 11:10-15)
- 1. The life of Shem (Genesis 11:10-11)
 - a. The birth of Arphaxad (1 Chronicles 1:17; Luke 3:36)
 - (1) When Shem was 100 years old
 - (2) Two years after the flood
 - b. After the birth of Arphaxad (Genesis 11:11)
 - (1) Shem lived 500 years.
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters.
 - 2. The life of Arphaxad (Genesis 11:12-13)
 - a. The birth of Salah at age 35 (Genesis 11:12)
 - b. After the birth of Salah (Genesis 11:13)
 - (1) He lived 403 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
 - 3. The life of Salah (Genesis 11:14-15)
 - a. The birth of Eber at age 30 (Genesis 11:14)

- b. After the birth of Eber (Genesis 11:15)
 - (1) He lived 403 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
- B. From Eber to Nahor (Genesis 11:16-23)
 - 1. The life of Eber (Genesis 11:16-17)
 - a. The birth of Peleg at age 34 (Genesis 11:16)
 - b. After the birth of Peleg (Genesis 11:17)
 - (1) He lived 430 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
 - 2. The life of Peleg (Genesis 11:18-19)
 - a. The birth of Reu at age 30 (Genesis 11:18)
 - b. After the birth of Reu (Genesis 11:19)
 - (1) He lived 209 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
 - 3. The life of Reu (Genesis 11:20-21)
 - a. The birth of Serug at age 32 (Genesis 11:20)
 - b. After the birth of Serug (Genesis 11:21)
 - (1) He lived 207 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
 - 4. The life of Serug (Genesis 11:22-23)
 - a. The birth of Nahor at age 30 (Genesis 11:22)
 - b. After the birth of Nahor (Genesis 11:23)
 - (1) He lived 200 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
- C. From Nahor to Abram (Genesis 11:24-26)
 - 1. The life of Nahor (Genesis 11:24-25)
 - a. The birth of Terah at age 29 (Genesis 11:24)
 - b. After the birth of Terah (Genesis 11:25)
 - (1) He lived 119 years
 - (2) He begat sons and daughters
 - 2. The early life of Terah (Genesis 11:26)
 - a. He lived 70 years
 - b. He begat three sons
 - (1) Abram
 - (2) Nahor
 - (3) Haran

IV. THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH (Genesis 11:27-32)

- A. In Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:27-30)
 - 1. The sons of Terah (Genesis 11:27)
 - a. Abram
 - b. Nahor

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- c. Haran
 2. The life of Haran (Genesis 11:27-28)
 - a. Haran begat Lot (Genesis 11:27)
 - b. Haran dies (Genesis 11:28)
 - (1) Before his father Terah
 - (2) In Ur of the Chaldees
 - (3) The city of Haran named after him (Genesis 11:31)
 3. The wives of Abram and Nahor (Genesis 11:29-30)
 - a. The wife of Abram
 - (1) Sarai (later to be renamed Sarah by the Lord) (Genesis 11:29)
 - (2) She was barren (Genesis 11:30)
 - b. The wife of Nahor (Genesis 11:29)
 - (1) Milcah the daughter of Haran
 4. The life of Nahor (Genesis 11:29, 31)
 - a. Marries Milcah
 - b. Dwells in Haran
 - c. Father of Bethuel (Genesis 22:20, 23)
 - d. Grandfather of Laban and Rebekah (Genesis 24:15)
 - e. Great Grandfather to Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29:5)
- B. In Haran (Genesis 11:31-32)
1. Those in the traveling party (Genesis 11:31)
 - a. Terah
 - b. Abram
 - c. Lot the son of Haran
 - d. Sarai the wife of Abram
 2. The route taken for their journey (Genesis 11:31) – (See Appendix 1 pg. III)
 - a. Leaving after the calling of Abram (Genesis 12:1; cp. Acts 7:2-4).
 - b. From Ur of the Chaldees
 - (1) An ancient city-state in Mesopotamia on the Euphrates River
 - (2) Not far from Babylon, the location of the confusing of the tongues/languages and scattering of the people (Genesis 11:8-9).
 - (3) A place of idolatry (Joshua 24:2)
 - c. Toward the land of Canaan
 - d. Stopping to dwell in Haran
 - (1) Located in upper Mesopotamia
 - (2) About halfway between Ur and the land later known as Israel.
 - (3) Not only did Abram stop when he was only halfway, he also brought his family with him, something he was told not to do (Genesis 12:1).
 3. The life of Terah (Genesis 11:32)
 - a. He lived 205 years
 - b. He died in Haran