

“The Tower Torn Down” Gen 11:1-9

- 1 – The whole earth had “one lip” – but soon there will be many peoples/languages, explaining the Table of Nations in the previous chapter. This theological framework is primary though chronologically this episode happens *before* the nations scattered.
- 2 – Shinar is Sumer, the “cradle of civilization” between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (Gen 10:10, Zech 5:11) – later Babylon, currently modern-day Iraq.
 - Recall that Nimrod, who it seems played a founding role in Babel (Gen 10:9-10), receives the praise of men while he neglects the glory of God (Isa 42:8). Babylon will later see this same man-glorifying attitude in King Neb (Dan 4:30). Because of sin, we *naturally* seek to glorify ourselves (Jer 17:5, Mt 6:2, Jn 12:43, Gal 1:10).
- 3 – The new construction method mentioned here indicates that stones were already being used by mankind, but now firm fired-bricks joined with asphalt tar for mortar would allow for a greater height, likely in the form of an early ziggurat.
- 4 – The desire for a super-city was contrary to God’s command to scatter (Gen 9:1). It might be difficult to go out and fill the earth, but as mankind sought security in their unity, they spurred one another on to do even more evil – relying on mankind, not God.
 - A tower that “reaches the heavens” is hyperbolic but likely also reflect a heart that sought to reach God’s dwelling to be *like Him*, the height of creaturely hubris.
 - App: Monuments to man’s glory today? Human beings want to leave a mark, some memorial of their existence. Is there not a grasping after immortality found in some physical structure, program or item bearing your name (2 Sam 18:18)?
- 5-6 – God’s steps in and (humorously) “comes down” from heaven to look at this tower, which is so far from His from His heavenly glory that He has to stoop to see it (Yes, God sees all, but this “holy scorn” is anthropomorphic, cf. Ps 2:4). God is not threatened by mankind’s potential, exactly the opposite: Man’s greatest attempts to glorify himself are nothing compared to His complete and total sovereignty (Ps 135:6-7, Rom 11:33-36).
- 7-9 – The name “Babel” is a play on the Hebrew word for “confused” (*balal*) and literally means “the gate of God.” This arrogant project ends with God tearing down mankind’s plans for greatness, giving them a *lack* of knowledge, power and unity instead.
 - Note the royal/trinitarian language here, similar to Gen 1:27 and 3:22.
 - App: Human speech is key to our existence and dominion in the earth, even in how someone is saved (Rom 10:17). What God does with this confusion that originates various nations and languages in the new covenant is noteworthy: Pentecost *reverses* the confusion of Babel as various people-groups believe the gospel as they miraculously hear it proclaimed in their own tongue (Acts 2:1-4)!
 - App: True unity is found in Christ (Jn 17:20-23, Acts 4:32, Gal 3:28, Eph 4:1-6). Our oneness is beyond all other fraternal bonds, meant to display the gospel – and therefore, the glory of God. May our only boast be in Him (1 Cor 1:29-31).