

TEXT: Genesis 11:1-9, 26

TITLE: the tower of Babel

POINT: The Lord keeps His promise by preserving the elect and not destroying the wicked at the power of Babel.

Recap: Back in the summer, I began our series of sermons in the book of Genesis. We began with chapter 6 and I ended with chapter 9 and 10 on Noah's prophecy on his sons. We are going to continue with the series today, picking up today from chapter 11.

INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, how many languages can you speak? 2 or 3? May be 4? This week when I was preparing for this sermon, I actually did a google search and found out that there are over 6500 spoken languages in the world today. I was pretty stunned because I have never thought there would be so many. And think about it, most of us probably only speak 2 or may be 3 of them. It is so incredible, isn't it?

But what causes us to be more amazed is that our text in front of us actually tells us that the world after the flood used to only communicate with one language. But why are there so many languages today? And will there be a day when we will be able to communicate with everybody in the world? So, this morning, we will be considering Genesis 11, as it tells us the reason why there are so many languages on the earth today, and God's purpose behind all the different languages.

Today, we will be looking at the text in two major headings:

- I. Human Rebellion – the building of Babel (vv.1-7)**
- II. God's Response – the preservation of the Church (vv.8-9)**

I. Human Rebellion - building of Babel

Remember that after the floodwaters have subsided, the ark landed on Mount Ararat. What we know about Mount Ararat was that it was a mountainous area. It was the area in which Noah and his family, and likely for many generations lived. Moses actually did not give us the exact time, for how long they were there for, but he tells us that generations later, the people decided to move east to a place called Shinar, a wet and fertile piece of land. **This migration to the east is very significant. It is because the movement to the east in the Bible is symbolic of the moving away from the Lord and His blessing.** Remember that after Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, the Lord placed two cherubim at the east of the garden to guard people from entering it, meaning that Adam and Eve were cast out to the east (3:23). Also, after Cain murdered Abel and as he went out of the presence of God, he lived in the east of Eden. Later, Lot, Abraham's nephew, would also move east out of the land of Canaan into where Sodom was. He was moving away from the Promise Land, the land of blessing. **So, what we see here was that the people here were following the same pattern in moving eastward. This is telling us that the world as a whole was moving away from the Lord.**

Notice that they have also rebelled against the mandate that the Lord has given to mankind. Remember what the Lord said to Adam at creation and to Noah at recreation? On both occasions the Lord said, **“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” You see, the Lord's command to mankind was to spread out and to fill the earth, and not to stay together at one place!** The purpose behind it is so that the world would be filled with people who bear His image, ultimately, all for His glory. **But what do we see here? Here, we see that these people were trying to build a place to stay together at one place.** And not only that, notice that vv.4 also tells us that they wanted to build a city and a tower that reached all the way up to the heavens, in order to make a name for themselves.

And what they wanted to do here has actually happened before. Remember what happened in chapter 4? After Cain murdered Abel. What happened? He moved east! And there, he built a city after his son Enoch, in his likeness. And after multiple of generations, they had an extremely evil group of people, who were in love with nothing but evil. **Do you see that the people in Babel here are following the same pattern as the Cainites? They first moved east, then wanted to build a godless city according to human likeness. More than that, they also wanted to build a tower that would reach all the way into the heavens. And the tower was not just a normal tower, but it was actually a ziggurat, which is a building built in successive levels with outside stairs. May be some of you have seen the remake model of the tower of Babel. It is quite incredible. The purpose of these ziggurats in the ANE culture were actually like temples, for the purpose of worship.** Since they believed that ziggurats were links between heaven and earth, through which the pagan gods would descend the stairs in order to live among the people. **So, what the people wanted to do here was to build a tower in order to elevate themselves into the heavens, so that others in later generations would remember them and glorify them.** And what they ultimately wanted was to become God themselves! Do you see what they were doing was ultimately idolatry? They wanted to be like God. And wasn't this also what Adam and Eve wanted in Eden? When the Serpent told them that the Lord forbade them to eat the fruit because the Lord didn't want them to be like God? And they ate of the fruit because they wanted to be like God! **You see, mankind was ever the same even after the flood, their hearts were still filled with evil, always desiring to rebel against the Most High God!**

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, we see here that the people have tried to build a place of idolatry and fame for themselves more than thousands of years ago, and what about you and I? isn't this also what the people in our society also have been trying to do? As people living in this world, we desire people to look at us and nod their heads and give respect to us? **But my point is that we can see this desire in our society as well.** Our hearts are still the same, we wanted to build a place so that people would look upon us and recognize us. The Bible calls us to live for His glory, as we are His image bearers, but instead, we rebelled and wanted to be like God.

But more importantly, the construction of Babel actually contains more significance. The word, "Babel" here can actually be translated as Babylon. And what was Babylon? Babylon in the Bible always stands as a symbol of organized resistance against God. Remember that they were famous for having the most perverted and wicked rebels or a ruthless dictator like Nebuchadnezzar, and even in the book of Revelation describes Babylon as the great harlot sitting on the beast that wanted to gather all the languages and people, to be a place that has its focus upon mankind and his glory. **So, what we see here is a prototype of the kingdom of Babylon, the antichrist Kingdom.** And this is what Babel was all about: uniting all the languages, uniting a people, building a kingdom city, and a tower which is focused upon man and his dominion. This was a place that was built to unite mankind in order to rebel against the Lord. Like what the Serpent always wanted to do, first in the garden, then with the Cainites, and here, with Babel. **In other words, what was going on here was really a revival of the reign of the Serpent seed.** We saw that it was weakened by the flood, but it was not completely destroyed. Last week, we saw that the seed of the Serpent was in the descendants of Ham, and now, it has regained the power it had in the Cainite dynasty. And the Serpent was doing it once again through Babel. He was gathering the people, uniting them to build a kingdom of man, so that the work of the Lord would be stopped!

So, how would the Lord respond this time? Remember what happened to the Cainite kingdom in chapter 6? The Lord destroyed them with a flood, through which the Lord completely wiped out everything on earth! **Would the Lord do that again? That leads us to our second point.**

II. God's response – the preservation of the church (8-9, 26)

Moses tells us in vv.5 that the Lord "came down" to see the city and the tower. Can you see the irony here? The people wanted to reach up to the heavens to God's dwelling place, yet, the Lord descended to see what was happening. It tells us how insignificant Babel was in God's eyes.

And this time, after the Lord had seen what happened, the Lord judged them by confusing their language. But why would the Lord do that? Aren't we expecting another severe judgement like what happened in chapter 6? **The Lord did not judge mankind with the flood this time not because he couldn't but because He was faithful to the promise that He made in chapter 9.** Remember what happened in chapter 9? We looked at this a couple weeks ago. After the recreation of the world, the Lord has promised that He would never again destroy mankind with the flood and also gave a rainbow as a sign. We could argue that the rebellion here was more wicked than what happened in chapter 6, and the Lord had all the reasons to destroy the world, yet, the Lord remained faithful to His promise. What a covenant faithful God!

So, here, we see that the Lord came down to confuse their language, and by doing so, these people could no longer understand each other, which also means that the building work must be stopped. Imagine they were building and one guy asked the other for a hammer, but the other guy couldn't understand and did something else? **That was why the place was called Babel, which originally meant "gates of gods," but now, after what the Lord had done to them, the word became "confusion."** When the people here wanted to gather to unite the world and all the people to build a place for the attainment of mankind, the Lord intervened, scattered them, and crumbled their work. You see, the Lord has once again caused the kingdom of the Serpent to crumble.

And this is a type of exactly what would happen to Babylon and to those who would respond in unbelief on the day of judgement! What would happen would be the same: the Lord would come, confuse them, and scatter them. Revelation 18:21-24 tells us what would happen at the fall of Babylon, "*Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. 22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. 23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."* So, destruction would be the destiny of the wicked people. And that was why the Lord scattered mankind across the face of the earth, and also changed their languages, so that the evil plot of the Serpent would not be accomplished.

But you know what, the beautiful thing is that the story about the tower of Babel does not end with the crumbling of the kingdom of man and of the Serpent, but according to God's sovereign counsel, the Lord has a greater purpose. Notice that after Moses told us about the scattering of the people across the whole earth, He immediately gave us the genealogy of Shem. And if you look at the genealogy, Moses tells us about the descendants of Shem relatively quickly and ended with Abram. **This is telling us that the answer to Babel was through the family of Shem, specifically, through Abram, and that's the church in seed form.** And if we read on, we know that the Lord would make a nation out of Abram and would ultimately establish His everlasting Kingdom through the Messiah, who would become flesh through the line of Abram to dwell among us, and would establish His everlasting Kingdom on the earth. **He would be the Divine Ziggurat through which mankind would be brought into the heaven.** Remember what happened in Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28? When Jacob was fleeing to his uncle Laban, he stopped at a place which he later named Bethel, at which he had a dream about a ladder that was set up on the earth and reached into the heavens. **You know what that means? It was a foreshadow of what would happen at the climax of redemption! When the Divine Ziggurat, the Lord Jesus Christ would come in the form of man, to live a perfect life, and to die at Calvary, and to rise again from the dead in order that all the nations would be gathered again in Him.**

And how would the people be gathered again in Christ? That brings us to the day of the Pentecost in the book of Acts. Remember what happened there? After the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, the Spirit of God descended upon His people and enabled them to speak in different languages. **And the purpose of that was so that the Gospel might be proclaimed to the Gentiles. It was the expansion of the kingdom of God through the church.** While the unbelief people heard the babbling of words and called them drunk, those who

have heard the Gospel in their own tongue were united by faith in Christ. You see, this is how the Lord expanded the church, by bringing the people who were scattered at Babel back to Himself. And this is what the entire book of Acts was about: the expansion of the church, the Kingdom of God, through the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles, so that all the nations would be blessed and be truly united through faith in Christ. This is why you and I from different backgrounds may worship here together and may rejoice together in the Good News of salvation. We are gathering today being united by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the builder and maker, and the foundation of this everlasting kingdom (Hebrews 11:10).

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, can you see how we are now part of this Great Kingdom of God in Christ?! Also, look around you this morning, you see different people from many different backgrounds. Maybe we have already gotten used to it, but what you see here at New Horizon is a picture of what heaven will be like, but with more people from different backgrounds, who speak different languages, worshipping the Triune God. This should bring you great joy.

But more than that, this should also pump you up to do the work of evangelism. And this is where I would invite you to be part of this kingdom work. You see, not all of us are called to be missionaries. But we may play a part either by prayer or by financial support, even by sending a letter or an email to encourage the missionaries. And this is also where you and I play a part by telling our neighbors in the neighborhood or friends at school, or at work about this Good News, or may be even inviting them to church. This is how Christ will have dominion over the earth and sea, through you and I, who are bringing the Word to others.

And on that day, when all the people of God are gathered, what the Apostle John saw in Revelation 7:9-10 will be fulfilled, *“after these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”* **May Christ have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.**

Amen. Let us pray.