

Fallen...And Scattered

Genesis 11:1-9

Doing the right thing for the wrong reason is still wrong. Whether it's building cities and towers, like at Babel, or getting a degree, closing a sale, or saving for retirement, all of these good things become idols when we look to them for our significance and security. Praise God, we do not need to earn significance or build security, for they are an absolutely free gift for all who turn to Christ in faith.

- Story of the Tower of Babel. Final narrative in “primeval history”
- Continues to illustrate fallen man’s commitment to make life work independently from God
- READ Genesis 11:1-4
 - o Map of “Shinar”; Probably located in Southern Iraq; Babylon
 - o Tower: Probably similar to Babylonian ziggurats discovered in Iraq
 - o Tower building and city building not evil in itself. Using technology of their day in cooperation with one another.
 - o What’s wrong? Motive.

Man’s ambition – 11:1-4

- **Independence from God**
 - o First city builder had evil motives – Gen 4:16-17
 - o Next city builder equally evil – Gen 10:8-12
 - Nimrod probably means “rebel”
 - Scattering occurred in Gen 10:25
 - Gen 11 explains the divisions and languages of Gen 10
 - o *What was driving mankind to live independently from God?*
- **Pride (and fear)**
 - o *Significance* outside of God’s will; *safety* outside of God’s protection
 - o 11:2 “Journeyed eastward” = movement away from God
 - o Tower = migdal (related to the word “pride”)
 - Symbol of pride
 - o “reach into the heavens”
 - ANE: Heavens were the domain of God; earth the domain of man
 - Psalm 115:16
 - o “make a name for ourselves”
 - Philo (Jewish philosopher): each man inscribed his name on a brick
 - It’s in all of us. We don’t want to be forgotten.
 - Problem: finding significance outside of God’s will = PRIDE
 - o Human pride will be crushed - Isaiah 2:17
 - Why? B/c God doesn’t like humanity and wants to embarrass us? Is God just a bully? I can crush them, so I will.
 - Pride is foolishness, and He wants His image-bearers to be wise
 - o In relation to God/compared to God, we are insignificant
 - Is 40:22
 - o Our greatness comes from being rightly related to God
 - Psalm 8:3-9

- **Fear – 9:1; 11:4**
 - Afraid of obedience. They want safety and security of city and tower
 - Lived on a plain. No natural defense. Tower would protect from enemies
 - Tower would protect them from something else
 - No stones; lots of dirt; baked bricks and filled gaps with tar
 - another flood could not touch them
 - They didn't trust God
 - Desire to be safe is natural, but what are you trusting in? Education, job, house, 401k, relationship? Not bad, but can undermine our trust in God.
 - God says "GO! Scatter! Make My name great!"

God's response – 11:5-6

- God came down (Irony)
 - Tiny tower
 - Psalm 127:1
- God confused – Gen 11:7
 - Cooking term; stir up the ingredients
 - Couldn't take advantage of technology because couldn't communicate
- God scattered – Gen 11:8-9
 - Sarcasm throughout
 - In Babylon, "Babel" = gate of God
 - In Hebrew it sounds like the word for "confusion"
- God always provides
 - Confusion and scattering was judgment; it was also mercy
 - Terrible trajectory – 11:6
 - "this is what they began to do" = just think what they will do next
 - Humanity has been hell-bent on self-destruction
 - They will become as willfully evil as before the flood
 - Deluged by flood. Gen 6:5, 11-12
 - Noah found favor; given a covenant
 - Peoples scattered; God chose Abraham.
- Tale of Two Cities: Babylon v. Jerusalem
 - Babylon is a metaphor opposition to God
 - God is preparing a city for His people, Jerusalem – Is 54:11; Rev 21:19-21
 - Foretaste of the reversal of Babel is revealed in the Church.
 - Rev 5:8-14
 - We will not remain forever stuck in Genesis 11.

Application:

- But this story is not about me. I don't live in the land of Shinar; I'm not a tower builder. I'm not trying to reach into the heavens and make a name for myself.
 - Who chose your major? You? Did you consult with your Maker?
 - Who chose your career? You? Did you consult with your Maker?
 - Who chose your house? Your car? Your spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend?
 - Who controls your money? Salary? Savings? Retirement?
 - When we fail to submit any area of life to God, we are declaring ourselves superior to God. We are building our own towers/kingdoms

- Every human has a “Tower of Babel heart”
- It has been observed: if pride is greatest sin, then humility is the greatest virtue
- How do I become humble? How do I become appropriately related to God?
 - 1 Peter 5:5b-7 – humble yourselves
 - Did you know that pride often grows out of fear. We are not sure if we can trust God to do what is best for us; to protect us; provide for us. We have no choice but to take matters into our own hands.
- 1. Replace fear with faith
 - Safe in the boat with Jesus.
 - He will deliver me safely into His kingdom.
 - Important because Jesus was in the boat with them.
- 2. Pursue great things for God. Make God’s name known
 - Jeremiah – are you seeking great things for yourself, seek them not
 - Ambition is natural. It just needs to be directed toward what lasts
 - Psalm 45:17 I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.
 - **Revelation 22:4** they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
- 3. Serve in the name of Christ

Recently in Chicago. Saw the Sears Tower (now named the Willis Tower). Committee met just last week and pronounced the new One World Trade Center in NY as tallest tower in US.

- The Height Committee of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat
- Who named that committee? How do you get on that committee?

I just imagined that as the committee was arguing and debating, making its final pronouncements, God was looking down and said (to Son and Spirit and angelic beings surrounding His throne), “Could someone go down and check on that tiny tower for me?”

- What we build for ourselves will not give us safety or significance
- What we build for God will last forever
- Whose tower are you building?