

HUMANITY REBELS

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 11:1-9

CONTEXT

After living in the ark for just over a year, Noah and his family stepped out on dry ground. Then God made a covenant with Noah that He would never again flood the whole earth to destroy sin. Like He had commanded Adam, God commanded Noah and his sons to fill the earth by spreading out and multiplying. Creation had a fresh start. One would think obedience and a desire to walk with God would be foremost on the minds of every human being after the flood, but sin still corrupted the hearts and minds of each new generation. And once again, God would not tolerate their rebellion.

KEY CONCEPT

Humanity rebels against God's commands and needs to be restrained.

As you examine Genesis 11:1-9:

- Reflect on our attempts to bring God to our level or to worship Him on our terms.
- Identify ways God still restrains sin today.



TIMELINE

God Judges Sinful Humanity with the Flood (Genesis 5–8)

**SESSION STUDY: God Scatters Proudful Humanity
at the Tower of Babylon (Genesis 10–11)**

God Makes a Covenant with Noah;
Commands Him to Fill the Earth (Genesis 9)

God Calls and Makes a Covenant with Abraham to Bless the World (Genesis 12–17)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Genesis 10:1-20
- Day 2:** Genesis 10:21-32
- Day 3:** Genesis 11:1-4
- Day 4:** Genesis 11:5-9
- Day 5:** Genesis 11:10-26
- Day 6:** Psalm 96



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Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

GENESIS 11:1-4

SIN CAUSES US TO REBEL AGAINST GOD'S COMMANDS.

*Circle the words that emphasize oneness and unity.
How many times did the people emphasize their unity?*

1 The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. **2** As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3** They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.) **4** And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Any religion that makes salvation dependent upon something man does, rather than what Christ has done, is the religion of Babylon."¹

—Don Fortner (1950–2020)

Key Concept: Humanity rebels against God's commands and needs to be restrained.

After the flood, God commanded Noah's sons to spread out over the earth and multiply (Genesis 9:7). Genesis 10 describes how the sons of Shem, Ham, and Japheth branched out, their descendants being the forefathers of the nations. But just as Genesis 2 gives a focused view of Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 11 rewinds and focuses on how Noah's descendants rebelled against God's call to spread out, instead settling in a valley to make a city that would be called Babylon and to make a name for themselves.

Some commentators believe that the architect of Babylon was Ham's grandson Nimrod (10:8-12), whose name means "rebel." He represented the rebellious nature of the people to resist what God had commanded. Perhaps the people feared that spreading out would make them vulnerable or cause them to lose their sense of unity. Instead of trusting God's provision and protection, they believed they knew better than God. They were content to stay where they were comfortable, and they set out to make a monument to their supposed greatness.

Why do you think it is so easy to disobey God?

The people wanted to make a name for themselves; they wanted fame and glory. In today's age of online influencers and Hollywood celebrities, the desire to be famous and known for our accomplishments is something we can fully understand. The problem, however, arises when we remember that we are made for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7), and He does not share His glory (48:11). Since the name Babel originally meant "gate of God," some scholars believe Nimrod and his contemporaries were trying to build the means to approach God or meet Him on equal footing. Like Cain, Nimrod may have believed he found a way to worship God on his own terms, but that's not the way true worship works. True worship stems from obedience, truth, humility, and love for God (Matthew 22:37; John 4:22-24; Romans 12:1-2).

What are some ways we try to come to God on our own terms?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

GENESIS 11:5-9

THE LORD RESTRAINS SIN AND ACCOMPLISHES HIS WILL.

Underline words that are repeated in the text.

5 Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building. **6** The LORD said, “If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. **7** Come, let’s go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” **8** So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city. **9** Therefore it is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD: God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Key Concept: Humanity rebels against God's commands and needs to be restrained.

The people constructed a tower that would reach to heaven, where God was. Despite their solidarity, Moses juxtaposed the arrogance of the builders with the magnificence of God. The Lord knows all things, yet here it is said that He “came down”—using human terminology, we can imagine God stooping down to view the city and tower the people were building (Psalm 113:6). Though the people deluded themselves, believing they could somehow exist on the same level as God, Moses exposed their absurdity. No one is greater than God, who is sovereign over all His creation, nor can anyone match His glory.

God was not threatened by the people's rebellion. Instead, the Lord's chief concern was that without anything to restrain humanity's depravity, no kind of evil would be outside the realm of possibility. In their rebellion, they “would build up a delusion of self-sufficiency through their false religion, corporate security, and political uniformity. . . . And in their delusion they would never turn to God.”² Just as God drove Adam and Eve away from the tree of life so they would not live in perpetual sin without the hope of redemption, God confused the people's language and forced them to scatter. What was a punishment was also God's restraint of sin.

How does God restrain sin today?

The people could no longer understand one another and had to migrate and live with people who spoke as they did. The tower representing their ingenuity remained unfinished, a testament to their foolishness (Genesis 11:8-9; Luke 14:29-30). The scattering was also a tangible symbol of God's greater design. God's idea of “oneness” does not mean one skin color, language, geographical region, or political ideology. The unity found in God's kingdom is that of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation together redeemed by Christ's blood (Revelation 5:9-10).

How can we be a group that refuses to “settle” and instead “scatters” and “goes” in obedience to the Great Commission?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

As a consequence of the rebellion at the tower of Babylon, God confused the language of humanity to scatter the peoples over the face of the earth, but through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God saves people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to make one people united in Christ forever.



ACTIONS AND MOTIVES

Read Genesis 11:1-9 and write down the various actions of the people seen in this passage and those of God as well. Then write down the corresponding motives.

| | ACTIONS | MOTIVES |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| HUMANITY | | |
| GOD | | |

What are my motives in the various spiritual acts that I do?
What are some ways to keep our motives in check?



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HEAD

Why do you think God allowed the people to begin a tower they would not finish before scattering them as He had commanded?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

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Read Psalm 96, focusing on verses 1-3. Pray through the psalm, asking God to provide opportunities to tell the gospel to the nations.

PRAYER REQUESTS
AND PRAISES



HEART

How does the church reflect true unity with diverse groups of people throughout the world?



HANDS

How can you help someone who may not look, think, or speak like you to understand the good news of Jesus Christ this week?

