

Babble at Babel (Genesis 11:1–26)

Grace Chapel February 20, 2008 Dr. John Niemelä

INTRODUCTION

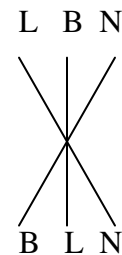
OVERVIEW OF GENESIS

FLOW OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

- Toledot 1): 1:1–2:3: God formed (days 1–3) so He could fill the earth with light and life (days 4–6) and He rested, because creation was done (day 7)
- Toledot 2: 2:4–4:26 (Day 6ff.) God’s evaluation of creation (after forming Adam) was, “Not Good that man should be alone,” but then He created the woman so the earth could be filled with people, but humanity fell into death while the woman was in her first pregnancy & that child murdered his brother before spawning a lineage
- Toledot 3: 5:1–6:8 All of Adam’s descendants died, except Enoch who walked with God, then demons began procreating with humans (in an attempt to destroy humanity, but Noah found grace in God’s eyes
- Toledot 4: 6:9–9:29 God used the universal flood to judge humanity which had become corrupt and violent, but delivered Noah and his immediate family to start over in repopulating the earth (with which God covenanted not to flood, but to provide for creation to procreate and to exact penalty for encroaching on God’s domain of taking human life) and He cursed Canaan’s lineage and blessed Shem and Japheth’s lines because Ham
- Toledot 5: 10:1–11:26 As the descendants of Noah’s three sons multiplied (with Shem’s inheritance line continuing through Terah), people in Shinar revolted against God’s command to fill the earth by centralizing (rather than being scattered) and building a city and tower, so God caused them to scatter by confusing their language

STRUCTURE OF PASSAGE

- A The whole earth had one language (1) Adapted from Ross, *Creation and Blessing*
- B They dwelt **there** in the land of Shinar (2)
- C They said to one another (3)
- D Come let us make bricks (3)
- E Let us make for ourselves (4)
- F a city and a tower (4)
- G And the Lord came down to see (5)
- F’ the city and the tower (5)
- E’ that the people built (5)
- D’ Come let us confuse (7)
- C’ everyone the language of his neighbor (7)
- B’ The Lord scattered them **from there** (8)
- A’ (He confused) the language of the whole earth (9)



NEW EXPOSITION:**11:1 Background: Humanity was united by a single language**

Observe that Genesis 11 preceded Genesis 10:5, 20, and 31

Observe Genesis 10:25. The most natural division of the earth to which it would refer would be the scattering of people after the confusion of languages (Genesis 11)

How could we depict this?

Noah

Japheth	Ham	Shem	World had one language
...	...	Arphaxahad	World had one language
...	...	Shelah	World had one language
...	...	Eber	World had one language
...	...	Peleg	Babel occurred in his lifetime (probably when he was young)
...	...	Reu	Increasing number of languages
...	...	Serug	Increasing number of languages
...	...	Nahor	Increasing number of languages
...	...	Terah	Increasing number of languages
<i>Divided by languages (Gen 10:5)</i>	<i>Divided by languages (Gen 10:20)</i>	<i>Divided by languages (Gen 10:31)</i>	

Why is it likely that Babel occurred while Peleg was young?

Peleg lived 239 years. His time overlapped with many generations (both of his ancestors and of his descendants). My take would be that he was young enough for his naming to be a commemoration of God's triumph at Babel.

11:2–4 Upon reaching the land of Shinar, the inhabitants resolved to build a great city and tower to make a name for themselves that they might not be scattered

11:2 Migrating people reach the land of Shinar

11:3 The inhabitants proposed making baked bricks

11:4 With those bricks, they planned to make a city and a tower reaching to the heavens in order to make a name for themselves, so they would not be scattered over the face of the earth

Building a city was not the problem

Building a tower was not the problem

The problem was that they were attempting to thwart God's command

Moses tells us that they failed to build the tower as high as they proposed

11:5–8 Upon seeing man’s efforts w/ the city & the tower, He concluded that their plan had great evil potential, so He confused their language (resulting in them being scattered)

11:5 The Lord investigated their efforts with the city and the tower

11:6 The Lord concluded that their plan had great potential for evil

11:7 The Lord determined to confuse their language (to destroy their unity)

Note how God echoes the people’s language of verse 3:

Come let us *make bricks* (L B N)

Come let us *confound* (N B L)

11:8 {In so doing} the Lord scattered them across the earth (thwarting their plan)

11:9 Babel is a testimony to God scattering humanity by creating babble

Tongues (in the early church) anticipates God reuniting the world linguistically

11:10–26 The linear genealogy of Shem eventuates in Terah’s birth (Abram’s father)

We already did an overview of the genealogies in the message on Genesis 5

CONCLUSION