

Genesis 11:1-9 Land of Confusion 11/26/17

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

(Pastor prays)

We have spent almost 11 months exploring the Book of Genesis. This book is vitally important for the Christian to grasp, to know and to love as we build a life of faith. Genesis is the foundation.

We mentioned it last week, but here we are standing at the base of the Tower of Babel. And when you read this passage, you get a sense of the pride and clamor for power, and that pride and the search for power sounds remarkably familiar to the tone of our day. The story of the Tower of Babel explores the question of destiny and determination. This story shows us what happens to countries and communities and churches that step outside the prescribed ways of God.

Last week we found out that the ancient pagan city of Babylon finds its roots in the name "Babel." And as far as human achievement goes in the Bible, Babylon was far and away the greatest, much like many would consider the United States: wealth, power, beauty and sex, all these marked Babylon as they mark the United States. The citizens of Babylonia were secure and strong. They were a super-power of the day like America

is now and Britain was 100 years ago. In Babylonia, the citizens understood “babel” to mean “the gate of the gods.” But in the Bible, what seems like *power* to people is actually *foolishness* to God. In fact, at the end of the passage in verse 9, the place is named “Babel” because the Lord confused the language.

Do you realize that what seems like *greatness* to our society is in fact *foolishness* to God? Let’s put ourselves in the context.

For all practical purposes in chapter 10, they are prolific and growing in number. They were unified, mobilized and driven to succeed, driven like many of you. And that can be a good thing. Nobody likes a lazy person. In their drive for success, the people in chapters 10-11 have cut God out completely, but not intentionally. Their pride and drive and want for more kept them on such a course that they didn’t remember (just like we don’t remember). They didn’t remember how much they depended on God and, in the story, God curses them with confusion – *babel*. There are lots of folks here that in 1,000 different ways are driven to succeed, and you will not be happy until you have a certain income or house or level of enjoyment. You need a certain person or position, and in your life it’s Babel all over again. If you pursue success at the cost of walking with Christ, you end up in confusion – in *babel*. For believers, how do we avoid that? How do we pursue success and honor God? From the text some things must happen.

Our Drifting Must Be Stopped

As we have been going through Genesis, you may have seen a trend in the way God judges and what happens to man. In chapter 3, Adam and Eve – East of Eden. In Chapter 4, Cain killed Abel – East of Eden.

In the text, verses 1 & 2, the people were on a continual movement in the same direction. *Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there...*

A continual drifting in the wrong direction. It happens in adolescence. Some of you are watching your own children go through it. Kids pursue popularity at the cost of walking with Christ. It happens in college. It happens in marriage, work, finances, stress, and children. And you drift in the same wrong direction. It could be a hobby or a luxury. When you pursue something at the cost of Christ, it’s confusing. If you are drifting in

the wrong direction, *It Must Stop!* And it *can* stop through God's grace and your repentance. If drifting weren't bad enough, let me give you something else.

Our Settling Must Be Challenged

Let me show you what I mean. The people moved East, found a suitable spot and settled there. *And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

The original command in Genesis 1 was to "be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it." After the flood in Genesis 9, God said to Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Mankind had twice been given God's directives to carry out God's will, and in Verse 2 of Chapter 11, they decided to settle for what was easiest and most comfortable. We might call it the "path of least resistance," and it happens every day with God's people.

You know them. They are "born again" and have great potential, but they become passive, undisciplined and easily satisfied. Are you sure of God's purpose in your life or do you settle for something less? So quickly we settle for the junk of this world. We fill ourselves with the cotton candy peddled at the carnival of our culture, and we get so full of that junk that we have no appetite for the wonderful banquet table of God.

What am I saying? Let me ask you something. Honestly, are you satisfied with where you are before God or is there a chance that you have settled. Listen, Christ did not redeem you to settle. He redeemed you to run the race that has been set before you, keeping your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Some of you have been in a sort of slumber. I wonder if you would come out of your spiritual slumber today and hear Christ speaking to you? There's more, infinitely more, in Christ for you. The drifting must be stopped. The settling must be challenged.

Our Rebellion Must Be Confronted

3And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said come let us. Two times back-to-back the people said come let us. Listen, the voice of submission is "Lord, Your will be done." The voice of rebellion is come let us do what we want. They invited

God and His plan to step out of their lives, and when we invite God to leave the vessel, the ship sinks. It's already happened in schools and the government. It's happening in churches – the Church of Sweden. It's happening in homes – everything takes precedence over discipleship.

In verse 3 they start to build using their own ingenuity and their own way of doing things. In verse 3, they used inferior materials. How many times do we make plans like that with no real regard for Christ, with no real seeking the Lord's desire and it's outright rebellion and it must be confronted. One of the worst things you can do as a parent or a friend when you see a fellow believer in rebellion is to enable or excuse it. Rebellion against God as a believer, if it's not dealt with, you end up confused and alone. The drifting must be stopped. The settling must be challenged.

Our Ambition Must Be Checked

What a disturbing phrase near the end of verse 4 that captures the spirit of our age. "Come let us make a name for ourselves". With that phrase, they declared the motivation behind their ambition. Their desire wasn't to honor God but to make a name for themselves.

This goes back to deciding in your life. Who does the world really revolve around? In the text, their ambition was about *them*, not about *God*. This happens in churches when preachers will use shock value and wild stunts to draw crowds. They are sensationalists. It's ridiculous and ungodly. We're not seeking to make a name for ourselves. We are pointing men and women to the name that is above every name – Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 63:12 says, *who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name*, It's not just churches. It happens with individuals too. So often life becomes about our own desires or feelings or emotions. How many people do you know who got their feelings hurt and quit coming to church altogether? It's immature.

There is something else here. In verse 4, *Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."* Man was seeking to cross barriers God never intended for him to cross. It happened in the Garden of Eden and with Cain

and Abel. In Genesis 6, it happened with the sons of God and the daughters of men. And once again, here in Chapter 11, humans are grasping at what does not belong to them, crossing barriers and boundaries that God never intended to be crossed all in the name of self and making a name for yourself. Instead, why don't you give yourself to the one whose name is above every name – Jesus Christ? It's not just our ambition that must be checked.

Our Perspective Must Be Corrected

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.

In verse 4, they have these great and grand plans to build a tower reaching into the heavens. In verse 5, the Lord has come down even to see their puny little efforts. What can seem like such a big deal to us, in the grand scheme of things, is really insignificant.

But how easy it is to be caught up in things that just don't have any real eternal value. I really think most Christians live a meaningless life of distractions, building their own little ziggurats that add no value to the Kingdom of the Lord. Get your eyes *up*, off the video games and sitcoms and American Idol and athletes who are false heroes. Get your eyes *up* from pornography and lusts. Quit living through your children. Get them *up* from more money and *stuff* of this world. Get your eyes *up* to the One who can liberate you from this meaningless circle of garbage so many of you are trolling around in. Get your eyes on *Christ*. Our *center* must be *Christ*.

In the text, God disrupted their plans at Babel because they were doing *their* thing *their* way for *their* glory. And God will share His glory with no one. Instead, He will share His grace and love and forgiveness with anyone who will call on the name of Jesus to be saved.

What we learn from this story is: If you pursue success at the cost of walking with Christ, you end up with a life of confusion. Come out of that and come to Christ.

(Pastor shares the Gospel, extends the invitation and prays)