

Remnant Life Church  
June 5, 2016  
**Sunday School Stories Retold:**  
**Reaching for the Sky**  
Genesis 11:1-9

**READ – Gen 11:1-9**

The story of the Tower of Babel is most often recounted as a way to explain the diverse languages of the world - it is that but it is much more

Where does this start?

- (11:2) - *As people moved eastward they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.*
- It is nearly universally accepted that Mt. Ararat, where the Ark came to rest, lies in the mountains that form the border regions between Turkey, Armenia, and Iran
- Moving east from there would have been the Plain of Shinar and today would include parts of Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria
- Nimrod
  - His father was Cush; who was the son of Ham; who was the son of Noah
  - Noah was Nimrod's great-grandfather
  - (10:8-10) ...*the first centers of his kingdom were Babylon...*
  - Nimrod was the "king" or founder of Babylon and would have spearheaded the building of the tower
  - The ancient historian Josephus (born just a few years after Jesus' crucifixion) writes this about Nimrod and bears out the Scripture...
  - "Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to reach. And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers. Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to consider it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than anyone could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them diverse languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand

one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, confusion..." (Ant. I: iv: 2)

Within the biblical account there are 3 key elements of the flesh nature of man that we must continue to address today – even within the church

1. "Build ourselves a city" (11:4a)

- **Genesis 9** the flood has ended and God gives a command as a part of the covenant He makes with Noah
- (9:1) - *Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*
- Contrasted to (11:4) *...and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.*
- Almost immediately the people of the earth set about to disobey
  - The entire foundation of their plan was in violation of God's command
  - Ever since the expulsion from the Garden of Eden man has been obsessed with trying to recreate an idyllic utopia to live in
  - It is the longing in our hearts for what was lost
  - Sin removed us from the place that God created us to live in
- God always had a purpose for man
  - Adam was immediately given an assignment - to care for the garden (**Gen 2:15**)
  - When sin came in it did not cancel our purpose to do His will it just altered how it would be done
  - The expulsion was not only a punishment but a continuation and preparation for God's plan for His creation
  - What was His plan? To reestablish relationship with His creation
- This is why we should never be quick to distance ourselves from those who don't know Jesus
  - We are called to be the salt and light of the world (without Jesus) not to each other (**Matt 5:13-16**)
  - That does not mean that we compromise!
  - Paul writes in **Rom 12:2** - *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*
- Many times the church can get sidetracked by turning too much of our attention inward
  - Our first purpose is to share the love of Jesus with others
  - God's first desire is to redeem His creation back to Himself (**Jn 3:16**)
  - Even as man is experiencing consequences for the first sin in the garden God offers hope (**Gen 3:15**)
  - We are the instruments that God uses to share that hope with the lost
- And that hope is not through the works of our hands
  - It is not by having the biggest, the shiniest, the most, or the best
  - It is not by accomplishment, position, or wealth
  - It is only by desiring to be in the center of God's will and abiding or living in His presence



- Out of their own self-centeredness those wanting to build the tower did not want to obey God but instead wanted to create for themselves their own utopia
    - Their desire was for security and preservation
    - God did not call us to protect our way of life at all costs; He called us to live with an eternal perspective
    - Their plan was doomed from the start because their purposes were not the same as God's purposes
    - Nothing will last that is not aligned with the purposes of God – not even churches
2. “Make a name for ourselves” (11:4b)
- Make ourselves famous; with power
  - Only God gives true, right authority
  - (Rom 13:1-2) - *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*
  - Many times this verse has been used poorly by men and women in the church to gain and maintain control
    - That emphasis is not in the right place
    - This verse should be used as a guide for leadership first and the people second
    - God is the authority of all!
    - Contrast that now to what Abraham received from God
  - (Gen 12:1-3) - *The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*
    - God gave Abraham great fame and authority
    - Why? – because Abraham committed himself to serve God in humility
    - He left the security of his own home to be obedient to God’s command
  - The builders of the tower exalted themselves in pride instead of exalting God’s name in humility
  - God’s name can never be usurped or made to come under any other
    - (Psalm 148:13) - *Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.*
  - And then here is God’s love and grace - You can’t glorify God without receiving the blessings and benefits of His glory
3. “Nothing they plan to do will be impossible” (11:6)
- The KJV says, “nothing will be restrained from them...”
  - God was not concerned about what man might accomplish but what they were capable of doing to each other through the evil of the heart
  - Accountability is what restrains the evil of man’s heart
    - Our first accountability is the reverent fear of Almighty God
    - Without that the evil and sinful nature of man always leads to tragedy

- Since this account in **Genesis 11** there has never again been a time when all of humanity has been united as one
- Because God, in His mercy, has always thwarted the intentions of the evil heart uniting for its own selfish purpose
- We have, however, been given glimpses of the depth of that sin
  - From 1933 – 1945 Adolf Hitler united an entire nation toward one goal and 17 million people were extermination
  - From 1920 – 1953 Joseph Stalin was able to unify the military and politics of eastern Europe and under his tyrannical rule and estimated 20 million people were killed in the name of their unified agenda
- This is why the end will come when the antichrist and his false prophet unite the world for one last attempt at defeating God
  - One last Tower of Babel will be attempted to be built
  - But God, as He always has, will in His mercy intervene for the last time

When God confused the languages at the Plain of Shinar it was an act of mercy

- He did it to preserve and spare the people what would have eventually occurred
- Satan's lies of utopia by man's hands always leads to destruction through sin and corruption
- Every great society from the Babylonians, Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Persians, all collapsed in on themselves by the corruption of first the leaders and then the people

The sad truth is our nation is rapidly headed down that same path

- But I don't believe it will be to usher in a new nation to take our place
- I believe it will be to usher in the last days and the final uniting of a sinful world against God

That is why we must stand together as a remnant for the Kingdom of God

- In **2 Kings** Isaiah is foretelling of the deliverance of the Israelites from the Assyrians
- *(19:30-31) Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors.*
- He is speaking words of encouragement to them then as well as us today

In Paul's letter to the church in Rome he speaks similar words

- He references Elijah's cry out to God in fear (**I Kings 19**)
- 7000 prophets reserved; a remnant
- **(Rom 11:5)** - *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.*

- God desires for us to be a remnant, to remain faithful, and strong in our faith!
- That will only happen when we take our eyes off of what we want, our tower, and desire to join with His purpose for our lives.
- Because it is in that place we will know a peace and a joy - including a right fellowship with each other - that no man-made utopia will ever provide!