



The Sermon  
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Genesis 11:1-9

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TRANSCRIPT

Praise the Lord that this morning I get to preach 1 through 9 of chapter 11. So please, turn there with me, Tower of Babel, Genesis 11:1 and following. I'll read the text, and then we'll pray and ask for the Lord's blessing on our time together.

Genesis 11, verse 1 and following: "Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 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. 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.' And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 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. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 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." Thus reads the word of the Lord. Let's go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, again we give You thanks this morning for the privilege that is ours to gather together as the church. We give You thanks this morning for our salvation in Christ. We stand amazed that You would send Your Son to live amongst us, to live a perfect life, and yet die on the cross, so as to make a payment for our sin. We rejoice this morning at the truth of the empty tomb. In the resurrection we see that the work of the cross is complete, and so we stand before You with not one sin counted against our name. We stand as children of the living God, reconciled to You, and adopted by You. And ours is the glorious hope that Christ will very soon return and gather us unto Himself, and we'll be with Him forever. We'll see Him face-to-face, we'll be made like Him in an instant; and we eagerly wait that day.

And, Father, as we wait, we strive towards faithfulness, obedience to Your Word, conformity to Your law. And yet we fail day by day. Even this morning, we sin. And so we ask afresh that You'd wash us with the blood of Christ, that You'd make us clean, and prepare our hearts to receive Your Word. Father, we trust in Your inspired, inerrant Word; it's life-giving; and we pray that it would be that for us this morning. Give us life. Bless our time as we give our attention to Your Word, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.  
[End]

So here we are again. It's Sunday, and this is what we do on Sundays. Here we are again. God's people gather. We sing; we open God's words; we fellowship. Here we are again. And I hope that every Lord's Day there's a level of anticipation, of excitement in your own hearts, as you look forward to coming to church, and do the same thing that you did last Sunday. At the same time, there's maybe a sobriety as you acknowledge that here we are again; still imperfect sinners. Here we are again.

We gather each Sunday and we bring our flaws, we bring our sin, we bring our brokenness to the church. Here we are again. And from time to time in the life of every local church there are sins that aren't dealt with, and they start to grow, and they start to become a little bit more evident and a little bit more ugly, and they start to affect those around you. Other people start

to get hurt by your sin; and that's been happening for generations and centuries. Here we are again.

Of course, we could extend that observation beyond Sundays. Tomorrow morning, it's Monday morning, and you'll do your Monday thing, whatever that is; perhaps it's going to work or something else. And hopefully in the Lord's kindness you look forward to your Monday routine and you do the same thing that you did last Monday. But at the same time, there is that level of brokenness that we feel. We never escape it. Our lives are constantly intersecting with the sin that exists around us. We're always aware of the fact that we're in a sin-cursed world, and whatever your routine looks like, you can always say, "Here we are again."

Genesis chapter 11:1-9 testifies to the fact that here we are again. We haven't really gotten anywhere. As you think through these early chapters in the book of Genesis, shortly after the magnificence of God's creative work and the glory of having set man at the pinnacle of the created order, having placed His image on mankind and giving him the enormous responsibility of ruling over the created order, we see sin enter into the world, the first act of disobedience; and thereafter we never really get away from it. Sin after sin after sin, these first few chapters of Genesis paint a very dark picture. And there might be some hope as we read of a worldwide flood. Certainly an act of judgment; but at the same time, don't overlook the salvation that God extends to mankind, as He preserves one family and He starts afresh. He wipes the slate clean and He says, "Let's go again," and maybe with that, a glimmer of hope; but not.

Just a few chapters after, the waters subside; here we are again. And what we'll see this morning is that this short narrative is written in such a way so as to make us think back to Genesis 3. The Tower of Babel incident is very much written in a manner that it reads as a full narrative, Take Two. The point that Moses is making is here we are again. We haven't advanced in the storyline as it relates to man's depravity. We haven't gotten beyond Genesis 3; here we are again.

And so at the end of this well-known short story, the picture is again very bleak and very dark. The way that Genesis is structured is a book. The first 11 chapters form the first section. And what Moses wants us to feel as we come towards the end of the first major section in the book of Genesis is that we are in desperate need of a solution. The Tower of Babel incident points us forward looking for God's grace. And praise the Lord, that's exactly what we find.

So we can think through this narrative in terms of man's sin and God's grace, and it actually divides neatly into three parts. If you look at the text, you see three times we read, "Come, let us," twice from the lips of men in verse 3 and verse 4, and then God responds in verse 7, "Come, let Us. And so we can anchor our thoughts off of those three speeches. And I've entitled the points, first, "Plans to build"; second, "Purpose for building"; and finally, "Reasons to confuse." Plans to build, purpose for building, and reasons to confuse; and in it we see again the desperate situation of mankind, and the gracious response of God that will ultimately point us towards the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So beginning with "plans to build," a little bit of context is always helpful. And as I mentioned when we got up here, we have just come out of a genealogy, sometimes referred to as the table of nations. We understand that this passage in chapter 10 tells us of how the people started to disperse after the flood. And there again, we might be forgiven for thinking that the mission is back on and that sin has been dealt with, because after the flood waters subside, the people start to do that which God had commended them to do: to spread out, to fill the earth, as He had instructed back in chapter 1.

But then we get this building project. Moses interrupts, as it were, the progression of the gospel with an interesting narrative about some builders. And we read, first of all, that, "They had one language and the same words." It's a point of emphasis: one language, the same words. It's Moses emphasizing there was a unity. And it's that unity that the people are going to use in order to advance their own ambitions.

Verse 2, "The people migrated from the east, they found a plain" – and the plain anticipates the building of the tower – "in the land of Shinar and they settled there. And then they said this. They said, 'Come, let us make bricks, let us burn them thoroughly. Let's begin this building project.' They had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar."

Now after this first announcement from these people it might seem like there's not all that much that's wrong with their intentions. Certainly they haven't yet told us exactly why they want to build; and as we read of their intention to form some bricks, we might be sat there thinking, "Well, is there really all that much wrong with what's going on?" And I would agree that there's no explicit sin here. But what there is are some warning signs. In this first speech from the people, there are some red flags. There are some minor chords, some ominous notes that tell us to be cautious, that suggest that all that's going on here is not actually that good.

What are those red flags? What are those warning signs? The first is simply that they migrated from the east. As you know, in the book of Genesis east forms a motif throughout the book which is all-together negative. The eastward direction in the book of Genesis is never construed in a positive light. So the very first time it happens is when Adam and Eve sin, and God pushes them out of the garden, and He sets them where? East of Eden. And from that moment on, any direction in an easterly direction in the book of Genesis is negative. They go east of Eden; God's judgment on them is to put them out of the garden. In the very next chapter, Cain kills his brother. God punishes him and pushes him further east of Eden. He's now further away from the presence of God in that easterly direction.

In just a few weeks' time, you'll read about Abraham and Lot; and they part ways. And Abraham says to Lot, "You pick. Which plain do you want?" And Lot picks the easterly one. So he goes off to the east, and immediately gets into trouble, such that Abraham needs to rescue him. And then we get to the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative and we're told again it's all happening out towards the east. And so on and on it goes. There is a motif in the book of Genesis whereby there's lots of traveling, and anything that goes in an easterly direction is associated with wrongdoing. So in verse 2, as we read

that, "The people migrated from the east," and they kept on going, they kept this progression, it should make us nervous. We're not sure that they're making a good choice here.

We then see that, "They found the plain and they settled there, and they said, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burning them thoroughly.'" The second warning sign is simply bound up in the notion that they settled. Again, it's not outright sin. We can't point to this and say, "Look what they did wrong." But there are there are cautions being given to us by Moses: "They settled there."

Why is that a concern? Because in Genesis chapter 1 God gave man His mandate. He said to man, "This is your mission: you need to go, you need to fill the earth." The building project of God was to expand Eden. That was God's intent. Here's Eden, and He says to Adam, "I want you to go and keep filling the earth." And as I said last time that we were earlier on in the book of Genesis, the image-bearer was to make God's glory known. That was the Adamic mandate in a nutshell. The image-bearer was to make God's glory known. "Fill the earth with image-bearers, those that testify to Me."

So as they settle, we're right to just ask questions: "Are they making a good choice here? They seem to be going against the mandate that God gave to humanity." And then finally, simply the fact that, "They made bricks." It's another warning sign. How so? If you ever been to Israel, you'll know that it's the land of rocks. So the Jewish people joke that when God made Israel, He sneezed, and He spilt all of His rocks out on the land. Wherever you go there's rocks everywhere in Israel. And any building project by the Israelites later on is simply them gathering these rocks. And they might fashion them to some degree, but certainly not making bricks. And they put them together, and they build whatever it is they want to build.

The making of bricks was something that was practiced by other nations. In the broader Mesopotamian area, the Egyptians, and then in time, the Babylonians, they were known for the fashioning of bricks for building projects. So is God opposed to technology? No. The problem is this, that

whenever people were seen to be making bricks and building towers – and there were many towers like this at the time – two things would always be true. Number one, in the brick itself the king's name would be etched. Whoever presided over this building project, their name would be etched into the bricks, so as to say, "This is my thing. This is all about me. My name receives a testimony here." And then the building project itself was always an attempt for that particular king to validate his existence before the gods. It was always an attempt for that king to say to the gods, "I'm someone special, you need to take note of me." And so here, the warning signs, the red flags are that the people come from the east and keep going in that direction, they settle, and then they start to make these bricks. And it should just make us nervous.

There's enough going on in these first few verses to worry that they aren't making a very wise decision. If I was to sum up the first, "Come, let us," in the Tower of Babel incident, it would be this: "Come, let us make a foolish choice." That's what they're saying: "Come, let us make a foolish choice." And as you know, their foolish choice is what leads to their sin. And that is the pattern of sin. It's the pattern of sin in our lives. It is so often the case, that we don't get up in the morning and say, "I'm going to go hard against God's will today." But rather, "I'm happy to make a foolish choice," and that foolish choice quickly leads to sin.

I was just thinking yesterday about these chapters of Genesis, these first eleven chapters. The first portion of the book of Genesis really does give us a fully developed theology of sin. We talk about the study of sin in Scripture, what can we deduce from the Bible about the theology of sin. You really don't need to go anywhere else beyond Genesis 1 through 11. Again, we see the glory of God as He speaks in that first, "Let there be light," and He makes the universe, the heavens and the earth, by His speaking.

We see the glory and the majesty that He gives to mankind, as He sets Adam above everything else. He sets His image upon him, and He says, "You rule and reign on My behalf." He sets Adam and Eve up as these vice

regents over the earth; and then, as you know, the first transgression. And thereafter it is one sin after another, one foolish choice after another.

Genesis chapter 3 begins as Eve is willing to tamper, just to temper ever so slightly with God's word, just to not represent God's words exactly, and it leads to sin. Genesis chapter 4 Cain just brings a second-rate offering, and God even intervenes and says, "Cain, this is not a good choice." He says, "Sin is crouching at the door and it is ready to consume you. Would you not just reconsider?" He makes a foolish choice, and from that he becomes a murderer. Genesis chapter 6, people are willing to go beyond the established boundaries of creation that God has set in place, and it leads to sin. Genesis chapter 11, they come from the east, they settle, and they start to make bricks. It's a foolish choice, and it leads to sin.

So we then move to the purpose of building, and the second, "Come, let us." Verse 4: "Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.'" Now very rarely in the Old Testament, and even so in the book of Genesis, do we get such a clearly articulated purpose statement. We're in Old Testament narrative, and we often have to work hard to deduce certain things. Very rarely in the book of Genesis are the intentions of man's heart stated so plainly as they are here. These people just put it out there, they put everything on the table: "Here's why we're doing this. Here's our purpose." And we can divide it into three thoughts, their purpose is threefold: they wanted to build a city and a tower to the heavens. They wanted to make a name for themselves, and they didn't want to be dispersed; and in each one, we see more of their sin.

So beginning first with their ambition to build a city and a tower. The original text is a little bit more terse than this, such that it's not exactly clear whether the intention was to build a city and a tower, or more likely, to build a city tower. Not a city and a tower, but a city tower. Perhaps you've seen the famous painting of the Tower of Babel from [Bruegel](#), and he says through his painting that this building project was this enormous round structure that is going up to the heavens. And if you look at the painting, this enormous structure in its circumference is teeming with people doing



life, and they're slowly building this city tower up to the heavens. And that might infer a sense of being able to sustain themselves, of not really needing God to build such an enormous structure that would sustain them, would sustain their living.

But the real issue is the fact that they wanted to build it up to the heavens. That's the real problem. Don't think that their intention to build a city tower to the heavens is born out of a desire to have nearer communion with God. That is not what's going on. They're not saying, "Let's build this enormous city tower to the heavens so that we can just get a little bit closer to the Lord." They're trying to make themselves gods. They're trying to build a structure up to the heavens to say, "We are equal with You, God."

Think again about the creation mandate. God puts Adam over everything. He sets him in a lofty place. And Psalm 8 tells us, "What is man that You are mindful of him? You've set him a little lower than the heavenly beings." But the point is, "You have set him a little lower than the heavenly beings. Your domain is earth. You have the most privileged of all positions on planet earth, but your domain is there, and it is not in heaven." And these builders say, "Let's get up there. Let's make ourselves equal with God." They're trying to become equal with Him; but more than that, we see then they say, "Let us make a name for ourselves. Let us make a name for ourselves."

Now as we've discussed before, the concept of a name in ancient times was much, much broader, much more significant than perhaps it is today. Today your name is what you're called by, and that's about it. In the Old Testament, your name represents your whole being, your character, your behavior, your worldview. Everything is poured into your name. And so as they say, "Let us make a name for ourselves," they're trying to define themselves; whereas again, you know in Genesis chapter 1, it's God that reserves the right to name Adam. And He doesn't shortchange him. He says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Let's give him the prize spot. But I get to name him," and he named him Adam, "from the earth"; this creature is from the earth. And that just emphasizes all the more the privilege that is ours, to have been taken from the dust, and yet set

above everything else. "This is who you are," says God. "I've given you everything. I've made you a vice regent over creation. I've taken you from the very dust and I've put you over everything."

But it's not enough. These people respond and say, "That's not enough; and what we actually want to do is name ourselves. We actually want to determine our own job description." See, if they're building up to the heavens was to make themselves equal with God, they're making a name for themselves makes them God. They're actually trying to replace God now and say, "We're going to do the naming around here, and we're going to choose what is our domain."

And then, finally, "Lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." Now this is an interesting comment, and it actually reads slightly strange, unless, of course, you have the bigger picture in mind. As you read through Genesis, you always need to be zooming out and thinking through the bigger picture: "Why would it even be a desire of theirs to not be dispersed again?" Because God said to Adam at the very beginning, "You need to go, you need to feel the earth." This is man's mission, this is what we're here to do: fill the earth with God's glory. And they're saying, "lest we be dispersed, lest we might just align with God's plan. We don't want to be dispersed, we don't want to partake of that mission, we want to do our own thing."

So to begin with, they make themselves like God, they then try to supplant God, and finally, they try to thwart God. They look at His purposes and say with crossed arms and outright disobedience, "We're not going to go." And the sin is just tragic. When God gives Adam His mandate, His mission statement, there isn't a juxtaposition with God's good purposes for man. It's not a contradiction for God to say, "I have My very, very best intentions for you, and I want you to glorify Me." The two go hand-in-hand: "Make My glory known, and this is the very best thing for you. You will be most satisfied when you get on board with this plan." And so the tragedy of this building project is that they think, they think they'll be satisfied making a name for themselves, and yet they'll only ever cause themselves ruin.

Now, as a practical point of application, what is it that causes us to make a name for ourselves? It is simply the pride of our hearts, it is a desire to not get onboard with God's stated plan in His word, and it causes us every single time sadness and ruin. You will not flourish to the degree that you don't get onboard with God's plan, to the degree that you are refusing to immerse yourself in this Book and understand what it is that God expects from you. You don't align your life with that, you won't flourish. All you're going to do is cause yourself sadness. We all try and fork God's plans. Every day there are ways in which our hearts are tending towards making a name for ourselves. It only brings misery.

Now the antidote is twofold. The antidote is twofold. Number One: You live your life according to Proverbs 27, verse 2. Mark it down: Proverbs 27, verse 2. You make this your life verse: "Let another praise you, not your own mouth; a stranger, not your own lips." Write it on your forehead, and every single day recite it to yourselves. These builders wanted to make a name for themselves, they weren't shy about championing their own greatness.

Solomon says in 27:2 of the book of Proverbs, "Don't ever praise yourself, let someone else do it. Let another praise you, not your own mouth; a stranger, not your own lips." Determine today that you will not be someone that draws attention to yourself. You will never seek to bring praise unto yourself. You're not going to be that guy, you're not going to be that person. And I think at this point in history, we have more tools to do this than just about anybody has ever had. The social media feed is the easiest way by which you can praise yourself. You project yourself to the world and say, "Look how great I am." And don't be mistaken, you think you're doing it in such a discreet way so that your pride really isn't on display; it is. Everybody sees through it. Pride stinks. It smells so bad, that even when it's tucked underneath and hidden away, the smell of it comes through. It doesn't commend you to anyone. And far more, it doesn't commend you to God. Let someone else praise you. That's the negative side.

Positively, the antidote to not falling in line with the builders at Babel is simply to attune your heart with a vision for the glory of God. They had not

dwelt upon the glory of the adamic mandate, they couldn't have. If they really understood the glory of which God had said to Adam in 1:26, "Go fill the earth, rule over it, multiply, be fruitful," if they had pondered that and seen how glorious a vision that was, not only for God, but for mankind, they would never have said, "Let us build a tower so that we wouldn't be dispersed." And our responsibility, every single person in this room, is to tune your heart with a glory, the glory of that vision, to get on board and to see how wonderful a responsibility we have, to not draw attention to ourselves, but to make the glory of God known.

As God gives that mandate to Adam in Genesis chapter 1, the prophets pick up on it time and time again. A common refrain in the prophetic corpus is as the prophets look forward, they say, "One day the earth will be covered with a knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." You read that over and over again in the prophets. "One day," they say. As they look forward, they say, "There is a day coming when the earth will be covered with a knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." They're picking up on the Adamic mandate when God said, "Fill the earth with My glory." And the prophets say, "It's coming, it's going to happen."

Now just think about the particular way in which they phrase it: "One day the earth will be covered with a knowledge of the glory of God. We will all know. We will know in our hearts, and around us it will be self-evident the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." Now that's the interesting part. "The waters cover the sea." What does that mean? Think about the ocean. They're saying, "The waters are covering the sea." So they're building up this picture of the ocean just pressing down on itself. That's the way in which God's glory will be known, it will be so evident.

Kent mentioned earlier, the time I spent in the submarine service, we would go away for months on a patrol, and we would always be at patrol depth. Don't ask me what that was, I'd have to kill you. Before we go on patrol, before we operate at patrol depth for months, we would go on what we call a workup; so just more sea time. We're not on patrol, but we're away at sea, and we're putting the boat through its paces, we're making sure it can do

everything that we might ask it to do while we're at sea. And one of the things that we used to do on workup was a deep dive.

And everyone feared the deep dive. These were old boats. And we would take the submarine really deep; and as we get deeper and deeper, certain things used to happen. You would hear the boat creaking. At certain points in the boat there would just be a drip of water coming through. The whole casing would actually start to squeeze together. So if you were using a cubicle in one of the bathrooms and we went deep, the door gets stuck, because everything's now pushed together; you can't open the door. It was a pretty nervous time, the deep dive; none of us enjoyed it. But you really got a sense for, as you go down, how much the pressure increases. If you had gone much deeper, the submarine just starts to implode. You just get crushed by the weight of water.

I'm thankful for having done a deep dive, because I think upon that verse that one day the glory of God will cover the earth. How? As the waters cover the sea. We're not going to know the glory of God in a half-hearted way. There isn't a day coming that the prophets speak of when we walk around and we say, "I think the glory of God is around here somewhere. I think I caught a glimpse of it somewhere." They say, "The glory of God is coming, and it will press down on you in a way that you can't escape it."

The glory of God is going to press down on us for our good in a way that causes us to rejoice. And so when you tune your heart to that vision, that reality that's coming soon, when you tune your mind and your heart to that truth, then you start to respond in the here and now and say, "What else would I do but get onboard with the plan." When you see that vision as clearly as the prophet saw it, then you say, "It would be absolute folly to do anything else. I would be the utmost of fools to spend my life doing anything other than making God's glory known."

But the builders missed it. And so they went about their building project, and it's at this point that God responds. God responds and He says in verse 5, "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which

the children of man had built. He says, 'Behold,' - verse 6 - 'they are one people, and they have one language,' - you see referring back to verse 1 there - 'they've used their unity for sin, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. Nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.'

It's very, very important to understand that when God says that, He's not saying it out of fear, He's not saying that, "Now they've begun, they will overpower Me." When God says, "Nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them," He's not saying, "This doesn't end well for Me." What He's saying is, "Now that they've taken this step, now that they've decided to hit the ejector seat as it relates to My mission, and now they're found on a different track pursuing their own name, their own glory, now that they've done that, there is no sin that is inconceivable for them, and nothing will be impossible for them as it relates to their own ruin."

You see, our obedience to God's word acts as a barrier to other acts of disobedience. Or, to put it like this, you take one step in the pathway of sin, you are now far more likely to commit other sins that previously you hadn't thought of. Sin is a slippery slope. You take a step in the pathway of sin, and now you are more likely to sin in other ways that previously you hadn't conceived of. God is saying, "They've done this, now they'll do anything to their own ruin. I'll still be on My throne, I will still get glory, but there's nothing that is impossible for them as it relates to their own ruin." So, verse 7, "Come, let Us. Let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."

Just about every storytelling convention that we have today originates in the Bible. I wonder if you knew that. We have lots of storytelling conventions, and we actually get them from the Bible, this wonderful narrative that tells us of what happened, this historical narrative crafted in such a way to tell us theology. One of the ways in which we often tell stories is on the 1-2-3 principle: "Goldilocks, she tried the first bowl, it was too hot; the second bowl, it was too cold; the third bowl, it was exactly right." We have many stories like that; and you see how it's at work here: "Come, let us," says

man, making a foolish choice. "Come, let us," says man, now making a sinful choice.

The third one comes from God, and He says, "Come, let Us," and I would summarize His speech by saying, "Come, let Us deal them a gracious blow." What God does as He thwarts their efforts, confuses their language, is to show them His grace: "Nothing is impossible for them. They'll do anything to their own ruin. My glory will not be threatened by man." That's not what He's saying. But He fears for their end because they're willing to have built a tower. "Come, let Us deal them a gracious blow. For their good, I will confuse their language."

I wonder if you've ever thought of it like that. I often read the Tower of Babel incident, and it projects my mind to modern missions, thinking, "God, why did You do this?" Imagine what could be accomplished in the realm of missions if we all spoke the same language. What a hindrance it is, how hard it is for missionaries as they go to a foreign land to be in contact for years and years and years just learning the language."

And I think, "But, God, why did You do this?" Answer: "It was My grace to you. It stopped you from sinning in a multitude of other ways. This is My gracious blow." And it's at this point that we do well to note those correspondences between Genesis 11 and Genesis 3. I opened this morning by saying the way it's written is intentionally to make us think of the fall.

So there is lots of words that are the same with the creation narrative. We read about the heavens and the earth, the whole earth; we read of lots of making. The, "Come, let Us," is taken directly from Genesis 1:26. There we refer to it as the divine plural, as God says, "Come, let Us." It doesn't occur anywhere else in Genesis 1 through 11 until we get to this point. So it's a key trigger to make us think back to that creation narrative. And now if you think big picture what's happened in between, God creates, man sins, sin explodes, 4 through 6, and then He wipes the slate clean with a flood. And as I said last time, the flood narrative is written in such a way so as to read like a new creative work. The waters subside, the land emerges, and man

comes out. God is saying, "There's a new creative work here. Noah stands in the likeness of Adam."

So we're hopeful this new creative work maybe things will go better; and then the Tower of Babel. It's a full narrative, Take Two, we're back where we began, here we go again. The sin that was in man's heart has not been dealt with by the flood; we're just as wicked as our predecessors. And so as this portion of Genesis comes to a close, it is a very dark and desperate situation in which we find ourselves.

Certainly we see the grace of God as He says, "We're going to thwart your efforts so as to not sin in other ways." But that doesn't give us the final answer that we're looking for. And yet, God does respond. God does respond in a very emphatic way in the very next verse. Just going to step on Steve's toes for a minute. "These are the generations of Shem." The name "Shem" is a play on the Hebrew word for "name." These men, these builders, wanted to make a name for themselves. God says, "You're not going to do it." And then He responds in all grace and says, "These are the generations of Shem. I will give you a name," He says. "I'm going to create a name, but it's got to be on My terms."

In just a few verses time He calls Abram. And notice, the first thing He says to Abram is, "Go," in line with the Adamic mandate. In contradiction to the builders He says, "Go. They didn't want to be dispersed. They weren't onboard with My mission. But you, let's see if you will obey. Go. Get the mission back on, taking My glory all over the earth." And Abraham responds and obeys. And part of the promises that He gives to Abraham is, "If you go, I will give you a great name. I will give you a great name, you will get a name, but it's going to be on My terms."

And as you know, the line of Abraham gives us the nation of Israel; and from there, we get the tribe of Judah, and the line of David, and ultimately, Jesus Christ, who shows Himself to be who? The Son of Man. It's so important, because here in Genesis 11:1-9, for the first time in the Bible, we read of that term, "the sons of man," translated here, "the children of



man," verse 5. Literally, "the offspring of Adam." It's what it means: the sons of Adam.

So Adam, what do we know him for? He was the first transgressor. After the flood, the offspring of Adam show up doing exactly the same as their father. Like father, like son, the children of man are disobeying. And as you chart that term throughout the Scriptures, the Son of Man, the sons of men, it's all over the Old Testament. And every time they're characterized by their disobedience towards God, until Daniel chapter 7, when One shows up like the Son of Man; and He obeys perfectly, He honors God the Almighty perfectly. And so God elevates Him. He sets Him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. And then Jesus shows up and says, "I am that individual." It's Jesus' favorite term for Himself: "I am the Son of Man. I honor God and obey Him perfectly."

And so Paul tells us in Philippians, "Because of His obedience, He elevated Him, and gave Him a name above all other names." So you see, the seeds of the gospel are hearing God's response. The ugliness of their sin puts on display their pride, their desire to elevate themselves. And God says, "I won't let you do it. For your good, I won't let you do it; but I will respond with a hint of the gospel." And as we cling to Jesus Christ, it is there and there alone that we find the proper way to go about our business, so as to not elevate ourselves, but to bring all glory to God; and it is only through Jesus Christ that we can bring glory to Him.

Then we get to Acts chapter 2. And as many have suggested the Pentecost narrative reverses everything that happened at Babel. At Babel, He dispersed them, He gave them languages so as to confuse them. Acts chapter 2, the bride of Christ is birthed, the church is formed, and people are coming together from all these different nations, and they are given this gift of speaking so that others now understand them. Through the church, God is pleased to work, so as to build an institution, a city tower that honors Him.

And then the narrative ends, as you know, in the book of Revelation. The last few chapters of the book of Revelation, 18 through 21, form this huge

chiasm, this literary sandwich: chapter 18, the destruction of Babylon. You see, chapter 11 of Genesis is the birth of Babylon. It's not a coincidence that He calls it Babel; and from there we get the arch enemy of God throughout all of Scriptures: Babylon. Chapter 18 of Revelation, they're destroyed ultimately. And the parallel component to the chiasm is the New City, the New City, the New Jerusalem, not coming from the ground up, not built by men, but it descends out of heaven. And God says, "Here is My city tower. Here is where My glory is known and where the goodness of man is found." And our responsibility is not to make a name for ourselves, to guard our hearts against the same pride that we see here in Genesis 11, but to anchor ourselves to Christ and His church, knowing that the very best thing we can do is put Him on display until Christ returns. May that be true all of us here today. Pray now with me to close.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for this short text that teaches us so much about our own hearts. We see the sin of these men on display as they sought to make this tower in order to make themselves equal with You, striving to the heavens, in order to make themselves gods as they sought for a name on their own terms, and very clearly refusing to get onboard with the mission of making Your glory known the whole world over. And our theology teaches us that the same sin does dwell in our hearts. There is such a tendency in all of us to desire to make a name for ourselves, to elevate ourselves, to assume a position that you have not given to us, and all the while refusing to get onboard with the most glorious mission that we could ever imagine, of making You known.

Father, we praise You this morning for the grace that we see in Your response, that You wouldn't allow them to bring about their own destruction. You thwarted their efforts. You confused them as a gracious blow, and immediately responded: the genealogy of Shem; the promise to Abraham, to give him a great name; the Son of Man in Daniel 7, who responds and obeys perfectly: Jesus Christ; the birth of the church; and finally, that new glorious city that will descend from heaven. That's where we want our hope to be.

So we pray that You would deal with our pride this morning, and deal with the sin that You know is in our hearts. Father, we pray that You would open our eyes to our sin and make it all the clearer to us, and that we would deal honestly with it. May we all be found as those who are striving to make Your glory known and not our own. And as we do that, we'll be joy-filled, satisfied, rejoicing in Christ as Your church, until the day He returns. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.