

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED GENESIS.

GENESIS, CHAPTER 11 : 1 – 9

Genesis 1:1... And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

11:1...one speech. Literally, “*of one lip and one set of words*”—that is, one phonology and one vocabulary, the same language as spoken before the flood. This may well have been the Hebrew language, or some similar Semitic language, since the primitive records were transmitted through Noah, and Shem. And since it is very unlikely that either Noah or Shem were participants in the rebellion and judgement at Babel.

² *And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.*

11:2...from the east. The phrase may mean “*eastward*.” It is possible that, as the people migrated from Mt. Ararat, they first went farther to the east, and then turned back westward until they came to the plain of Shinar. (***Sumer***) This fertile valley so reminded them of Eden that they named its two rivers (***Tigris and Euphrates***) after two of the Edenic rivers.

11:2...land of Shinar. The reference to Shinar ties back in to Genesis 10:10, reminding us that the leader of the population by this time was Nimrod, “***the mighty hunter before the Lord***.” (10:9)

11:2...dwelt there. Their decision to “*dwelt*” here in one location was in defiance of God’s command to “***replenish the earth***.” (9:17) God’s design was to have a multiplicity of local governmental units (9:5-6, Acts 17:26-27) but, Nimrod purposed to establish a one-government dictatorship under himself. When Shem’s son Asshur settled in a separate location, Nimrod quickly took it over. (10:11)

³ *And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.*

11:3...Go to. Literally, “*give*”—indicating that a council had reached a decision concerning various possible courses of action and was now pronouncing its decision.

11:3...for mortar. The first decision was to develop a brick-making industry, with kiln-baked clay bricks and asphalt from nearby pits as mortar. This would enable them to plan and develop strong, permanent buildings.

⁴And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

11:4...a tower. A second council, no doubt soon after the first, reached the firm decision to stay permanently in the Babel metroplex, erecting a strong capital city with a great central tower symbolizing its unity and centralizing its culture. This tower became the prototype of all the great ziggurats (*stepped towers*) and pyramids of the world.

11:4...unto heaven. The words “*may reach*” are not in the original text. The tower was undoubtedly promoted as a great religious monument, dedicated “*unto heaven.*” Its top would be used for worship and sacrifice, and the rank and file probably felt at first that its beauty and grandeur would honor God. Almost certainly the walls, and ceiling of the shrine at the top were emblazoned with the painted representations of “*man, and ...birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,*” (*Romans 1:23*) which depicted the universal signs of the zodiac. This remarkable system was probably originally formulated by the pre-flood patriarchs to depict the primeval prophecies of the coming Seed of the woman and God’s ultimate victory over Satan in a permanent record in the stars themselves.

(Note Genesis 1:14: The Hebrew word for “signs” is the same word (oth) as used for Cain’s “mark” (4:15) and for Noah’s “token.” (meaning rainbow—9:12) Evidently the stars were arranged by God to “signify” something to those on the earth, not just scattered evenly or randomly around in space. God even named the stars and their constellations. (Job 38: 31-33, Isaiah 40:26) For their possible significance, see Amos 5:8, Job 9:9, 26:13, 38:32.

Under Nimrod’s subtle corruption of God’s truth, however, this “*gospel in the stars*” was soon distorted into astrology, and evolutionary pantheism, (*The belief that God is not separate from the universe but is the universe itself*) then into spiritism, (*contracting or consulting with spirits of the dead through mediums or seances*) and polytheism, (*the belief and worship of more than one god*) as people

gradually ceased worshipping the true God of Heaven and turned to “*the host of heaven*,” the fallen angels.

11:4...scattered abroad. The intent of the leaders of this rebellion was flagrant rejection of God’s command.

⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

11:5...came down. God was well aware of all that was transpiring but, was long-suffering, allowing ample time for repentance. The expression “*came down*” is figurative, indicating that the rebellion had now gone too far and required divine intervention.

⁶ And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

11:6...one language. In God’s judgement, the main problem was the unity of the people; the one most effective way of thwarting unity would be to prevent communication.

11:6...nothing will be restrained. Nimrod, with direct access to demonic intelligence and satanic power would be invincible without divine intervention. No doubt there was a faithful remnant (*Noah, Shem*) but, these were helpless without God’s action.

⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

11:7...Go to. A council in Heaven (*perhaps mocking Nimrod’s councils—note Psalm 2:1-4*) decrees the confusion of tongues. This act is clearly supernatural, involving the divine creative power which Satan could neither duplicate nor reverse.

11:7...confound their language. In some unexplainable and miraculous manner, God altered the brain/nerve/speech mechanism of the Babylonian rebels to give each family unit (*possibly the 70 families of Chapter 10*) its own distinctive language. With all this, however, they all remained truly human, unchanged in basic thought processes or moral character. Further, their distinctive languages

were still sufficiently alike that they could, with time and much effort, learn to speak each other's languages. For some time to come, however, they could no longer communicate and, therefore, they could no longer cooperate. They were forced to obey God's earlier command to scatter abroad and to fill the earth with different nations and governmental units.

⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

11:8...scattered them abroad. The tower had been completed and was actively in use but, the city was still unfinished. Probably all families except that of Nimrod himself departed from Babel, leaving him and his immediate family the burden of developing his own tribe at Babel as best they could. These probably became the Sumerians. The others scattered into various regions as already described in Genesis 10, some eventually developing great civilizations. This account, originally written by Shem, (**11:10**) is reflected in somewhat distorted form in the legends of other nations, including a tablet excavated at Ur. There is no better scientific theory to date for the origin of the various families of languages. All such theories seem to point to an origin in the Middle East.

11:8...they left off. In addition to the Babel tablet found at Ur, an inscription purportedly made by Nebuchadnezzar (**16 centuries after Nimrod**) on the base of the remains of a tower in Borsippa, (**a Greek word possibly meaning "tongue - tower"**) some seven miles southwest of Babylon, claims that he (**Nebuchadnezzar**) was rebuilding the base of the ancient tower of Babel.

⁹ Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

11:9...Babel. The Hebrew word "**babel**" means "**mixed**" or "**confusion.**" It was associated by the writer with the "**babble**" of sounds which was the last memory held by all who scattered from the city. The word "**babble**" is an example of onomatopoeia, (**a word that sounds like the noise it describes. Like the Boom of a Firework**) a word that imitates an actual sound, and thus is essentially the same in all languages. The name Babel, therefore, does not really mean "**gate of God,**" as its later apologists claimed but, "**confusion.**"

11:9...all the earth. As the people scattered, each family gradually became a tribal unit, and each had to develop its own distinctive culture as best it could. Each for a time would have to live by hunting and gathering, residing in caves or temporary shelters. The stronger families would occupy the best nearby sites, (*the Nile valley*) while others would be forced further away. Although they were all familiar with the arts of agriculture, animal husbandry, ceramics, metallurgy, construction, navigation, etc., each family would require time, population growth, and discovery of sources of metals and building materials.

They would have all known how to write, but now, with a completely new speech, each tribe would need to invent an entirely new written language, and this would require still more time and ingenuity. Within a few generations, however, all these attributes of “*civilization*” had surfaced all over the world, even on distant continents. As populations grew, some tribes eventually reached into every part of the world. In some instances they traveled by land bridges (*Bering Strait, Malaysian Strait*) which existed for perhaps a millennium during the Ice Age which followed the Flood.

In other cases, they established colonies through sea explorations. (*such as the Phoenicians*) All carried essentially the same Babylonian culture and religion with them, unfortunately, so that Babylon is called in the New Testament “**THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS (that is, “idolatries”) OF THE EARTH.**” (*Revelation 17:5*) At the same time, they also carried a faint remembrance of the true God and His promises, especially remembering the divine judgment of the great flood in their traditions. Each retained knowledge of God, and could see enough evidence of Him in both the creation and their own natures (*John 1:9, Romans 1:20. 2:13-15*) so they were inexcusable in their almost universal descent into the religious morass of evolutionary pantheism, astrology, spiritism, polytheism and, finally, atheistic materialism.