

December 10/11, 2011  
Genesis 10-11  
“The Babble at Babel”  
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Whether it’s verbal or non-verbal, communication can have its challenges. These problems can be traced back to the account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter eleven. This account is included in the Bible not just about poor communication, but to inform us about a time when God suddenly and supernaturally affected the cognitive part of the human brain to impart different languages to the people of that day so they would not be able to communicate.

In [Genesis 11:1](#), we learn that there was one “*common language*,” which many consider to have been Hebrew. <sup>1</sup> Today, according to the Linguistic Society of America, there are more than 6,800 spoken languages in the world. The most widely spoken, in terms of a person’s native tongue are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and English, respectively. The United Nations has six official languages used in meetings: Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Spanish, and Russian. <sup>2</sup>

Not only was their language confused, another aspect of this incident was that people naturally segregated into linguistic groups, so Babel was the place that people formed their own subgroups. When that happened, a common gene pool became segregated. So what ended up happening over time was that different ethnic groups emerged as dominant genes became unique to that subgroup.

When you consider all of the different races, the distinct physical characteristics that we see in the world today, we need to be reminded that we were originally all a part of the same gene pool. It’s when people are separated into their own communities, because of a common language, that the people in those communities would have common ethnic, physical features that would emerge.

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<sup>1</sup> All of the names in the genealogical record of Noah’s three sons in Genesis 10 have Hebrew meanings.

<sup>2</sup> <http://1howmany.com/how-many-languages-in-the-world>

**Genesis 11:2** tells us that this even happened in *“the plain of Shinar”* as *“men moved eastward.”* This means that after the Ark landed on the mountains of Ararat, in what is modern-day Turkey, people naturally migrated eastward because they were simply following the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from their headwaters to the valley between those two rivers, which the Greeks called Mesopotamia.<sup>3</sup> However, before the Greeks, this region was called Babylonia, and its capital city was called Babylon or city of Babel. So, the Tower of Babel was located in ancient Babylon, which is about 60 miles south of Baghdad in Iraq.

**Genesis 11:4** reveals the reason God was offended by with what they were doing: *“Come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens...”* Baking bricks isn’t bad, building a city isn’t bad, and constructing a tower isn’t bad. The problem is that they wanted a tower so they would be lifted up into the sky to worship creation rather than the Creator, and that’s exactly what they set out to do.

### They Worshiped The Sun, Moon, And Stars

1. The tower they were building is what archaeologists call a ziggurat.
2. The ziggurat used a series of platforms with a staircase leading to each succeeding platform that led to an observation deck, so to speak. (See photo at the end of the study guide)<sup>4</sup>
3. It was on the high point of the ziggurat that occult worship of the sun, moon and stars took place.
4. Herodotus, a Greek historian,<sup>5</sup> wrote that he saw one that was more than 700 feet tall.
5. Today, archeologists have identified the ruins of at least 25 ziggurats scattered throughout Iraq.
6. The origins of all occult worship in human history can be traced to this region.
7. The oldest records of astrology come from this region.
8. According to **Deuteronomy 17:2-5**, God has made the worship of the sun, moon and stars a capital offense - *“If a man or woman living among you in one*

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<sup>3</sup> Mesopotamia means, the land between two rivers.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bible-archaeology.info/ziggurats.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus>

*of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.”*

9. If you're into astrology, horoscopes, the zodiac, mysticism involving "mother nature" and "harmony with the earth," aligning yourself with the planets, you not only acting foolishly, your participating in what God calls evil.
10. Fascination with creation needs to be stopped

### They Exalted Self Rather Than God And Refused To Make Him Known

11. **Genesis 11:4b** includes two key phrases: *"make a name for ourselves"* and *"and not be scattered."*
12. The shelves in bookstores are crowded with self-help books and books about self-esteem, because there is a false notion that we need to learn to love ourselves more than we do.
13. The problem in our culture is definitely not self-esteem; it's a God-esteem problem.
14. Human beings are naturally self-absorbed and self-serving, so it's not too hard to see how the people in this account were doing nothing out of the ordinary.
15. They wanted to make a name for themselves, and not for God.
16. They did not want to be scattered, which was in direct defiance of the Lord's command to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 1:28a**.<sup>6</sup>
17. Noah and his family were given the same mandate in **Genesis 9:1**.<sup>7</sup>
18. God's desire is that mankind would fill the earth in order to spread the news about who God is, and it's a sure thing that God calls man to make him known and tell of his greatness.

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<sup>6</sup> "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.' "

<sup>7</sup> "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.' "

19. The goal of the people of Babel was to show others how great they were and not how great God is, and to make themselves known and not God.
20. [Psalm 145:3-6](#) - *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds.”*
21. Our problem is no different than the people of Babel; we want to proclaim our own deeds; we want to speak of our mighty acts; and we want to tell off our awesome works.
22. We will either have a high view of God and a low view of man, or we'll have a high view of man and a low view of God.
23. [Genesis 11:5](#) tells the details about the Lord's coming down to check out the building project, and he's not impressed, he's concerned because they are evil, self-centered worshipers of the sun, moon and stars.
24. God knows that if they are left to themselves, their evil will continue to escalate; their worship of the starry hosts will continue to drive them further from him and drive them deeper into Satanic things; their isolation and self-exaltation will limit others from hearing the truth.
25. God's answer to all that was going on was to confuse their language, which would scatter them all over the earth. ([Genesis 11:7](#))
26. If we fast-forward a few thousand years and it's obvious that the world is full of wicked people who love themselves more than God; who are more interested in making a name for themselves than for God; who dabble in the occult and mysticism; and are sinful to the core.
27. God, in his infinite mercy, sent his only son, Jesus, to take all of the punishment intended for sinners and die on a cross, so that through faith in his finished work on the cross and his resurrection from the grave, our hearts might be cleansed and our future in heaven secured.
28. [Mark 16:15](#) - *“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*
29. [Matthew 5:16](#) - *“... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

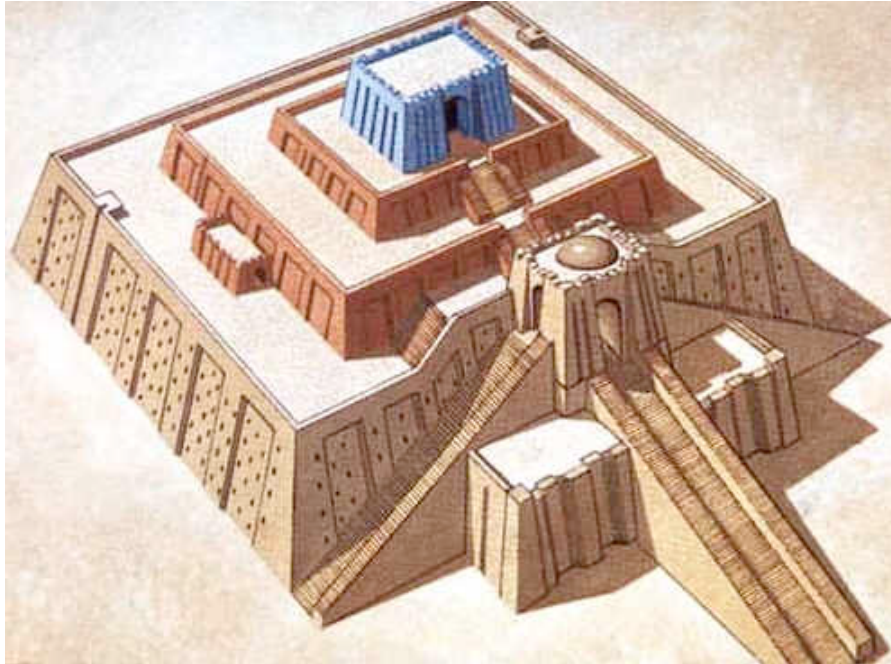
30. [Psalm 67:1-2](#) - “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 11:1-9](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about times when they’ve had a difficult time communicating (verbal or non-verbal) with someone who speaks another language.
4. How do people in our culture involve themselves in the occult?
  - a. Have you been a devotee of astrology and horoscopes?
  - b. Did you feel it was okay for Christians to participate in these things? (See #8 and #9 above)
  - c. How did the Lord lead you out of these things?
5. Read and discuss the article in *Time Magazine* regarding the changes to the astrological calendar, etc.<sup>8</sup>
6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank yourself regarding your desire to make a name for yourself?
7. What are some of the reasons/causes for people to have what they believe is low self-esteem?
8. How would you describe yourself when it comes to being a “God-esteemer”?
  - a. Read and discuss [Psalm 145:3-6](#).
9. Are you intentional about the mission of Cornerstone Chapel to “Make Him Known”?
  - a. Read and discuss [Mark 16:15](#).
  - b. Read and discuss [Matthew 5:16](#).
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: worship God alone; esteem God instead of self; and make him known wherever they go!<sup>9</sup> ([Psalm 67:2](#))

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<sup>8</sup> <http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/01/13/horoscope-hang-up-earth-rotation-changes-zodiac-signs/>



\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).