

**Utter Confusion**  
**Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC**  
**Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.**  
**August 9, 2020**

Diaspora XXI – The Church Scattered, Twenty-first Sunday

Text            Genesis 8:1-4, 14-17, 9:1, 2, 12-15, 11:1-9

Purpose:        To help us understand that God is completely sovereign over creation. When man began to exalt himself above God, God confused their languages and scattered the peoples across the earth.

If we pause for a few moments and examine how far we have come in the book of Genesis, we will see that in terms of chapters, we have not progressed very far. But if we examine the questions we have answered and truly understood the importance of what God's word is telling us, then we can see we have learned a great deal.



We have learned ...

- ... about the nature of one God.  
(Omniscience, Omnipotent, Omnipresent)
- ... who created the earth, moon, and stars.  
(Creation vs. Evolution)
- ... about angels and Satan. (Spiritual warfare)
- ... about how mankind came into existence.  
(Creation, biology, genetics)
- ... how sin entered the world. (Depravity of man)

... the right way to worship God  
 (on the basis of the blood)  
 ... that God has promised He would send a redeemer  
 to restore His creation. (Redeemer Jesus Christ)  
 ... that there was a great flood and how God was  
 judging sinfulness. (Archeology and geology)

Today, we will examine one of the lingering questions  
 about our world. That question is, **“Where did all these  
 different languages and people groups come from?”**

Our scripture reading this morning moves us from those  
 eight individuals that were on that ark, forward several  
 hundred years to the Tower of Babel.

### I. Noah’s Family

When the ark landed on dry ground, Noah worshipped God  
 by bringing a lamb and offering it back to God as a sacrifice.  
 Noah realized that without God, they too would have  
 drowned in that year long flood.

God told Noah that He was making a covenant with all  
 humanity and creation that never again would He flood the  
 earth in the same manner. As a sign of that covenant, God  
 placed a rainbow in the clouds as a sign of remembrance of  
 His promise.

Even to this day, when I see a  
 rainbow in the sky, I am  
 reminded of this story of Noah  
 and God’s covenant.

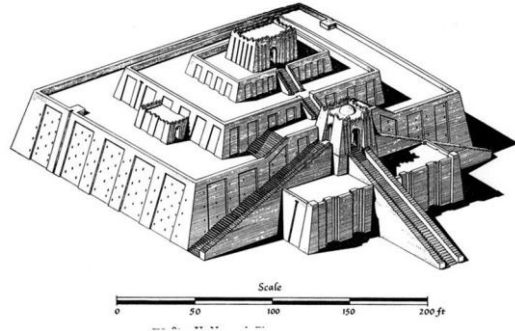


If we had time today, we could study the listings of the  
 family names listed in Genesis chapter ten. The  
 genealogies of Shem, Ham, and Japheth are delineated there.  
 If you study carefully, you will find that there are 70  
 different people groups, or nations, or distinct nationalities.  
 In just a few chapters, we find the answer as to where we  
 came from and who our ancestors are.



At that time, all of the people spoke the same language. If  
 you remember in Genesis 9:1- 2, God told them to be  
 fruitful and multiply and fill the entire earth. This  
 command included scattering out over the face of the earth.  
 But just like the generations in the past, the people didn't  
 obey.

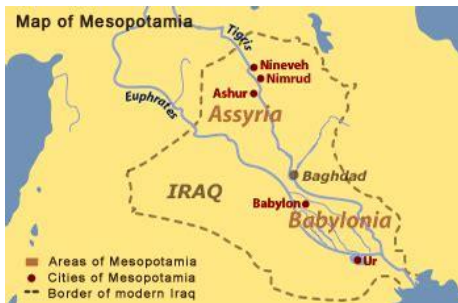
This rising group of people made a decision for themselves that they too wanted to be a god. One way to do that was to make a tower that reached up into the clouds. They gathered together in a region that has become known as Babylon. Here they constructed something similar to a Ziggurat. A spiral shaped pyramid that had pathways to the top where they could worship and enter into the celestial city.



As an act of judgment, God brought utter confusion to those people and gave them different languages. Because they could not communicate with each other, they divided up into common languages and headed in different directions. The work on the tower stopped.

Later in history, the city of Babylon was rebuilt but God judged it again and to this day, it is a desolate place.

Do you know where in the world this place called Babel is located? It is located in the country of Iraq. The ancient city of Babylon is located about 56 miles south of Bagdad. This is the place that has been in the news for over the last 20 years. It is the place where ISIS (an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is rising in power and quickly moving across the region



conquering territory and people in attempts to form a purely Islamic nation based upon sharia law as taught in Islam and by their prophet Mohammad. ISIS may have been pushed back, but I am sure it is still smoldering underneath the surface to emerge once again.

## II. The Location of the Tower.

You may be surprised to know that many of the places listed in the Bible are found in the country of Iraq. A few years ago, someone gave me a copy of the following information about the Bible and the nation of Iraq.

Here is a brief listing of what is in Iraq.

The Garden of Eden – at the intersection of the Tigris and Euphrates River

This is where Noah built the Ark

Tower of Babel – at Babylon

Abraham was from Ur – located in southern Iraq

Isaac's wife, Rebekah is from Nahor

Jonah preached to the inhabitants of Nineveh

The Assyria empire conquered the ten tribes of Israel

Amos the prophet was from Iraq

The events in the book of Esther took place in Iraq

The book of Nahum was a prophecy against a city in Iraq

The Babylonian Empire destroyed Jerusalem – 586 BC

Ezekiel preached in Iraq

The “wise men” that came to see the infant Jesus were possibly from Iraq

The King Belshazzar saw the “handwriting on the wall” in Iraq

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in the fiery furnace in Iraq  
Peter preached in Iraq  
The “evil man” mentioned in The Book of Revelation is from Iraq

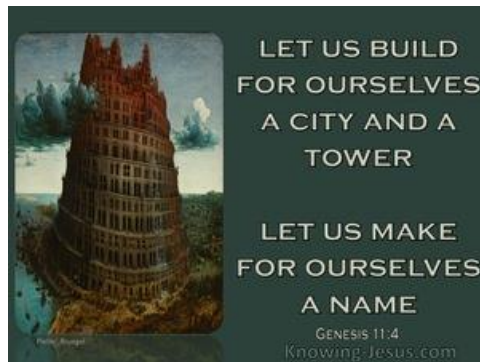
You will not find the word Iraq in the Bible, but you will find that it goes by different names. Babylon, Land of Shinar, as well as Mesopotamia. This is the land between two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates.

### III. The People’s Plan – Human Ambition

Here in the plains of Shinar, the Bible states that the people had multiplied and were united by one common language. There arose a common desire among the people. There was a growing ambition in their hearts.

#### A. The Object in View

The object of their plan can be found in chapter 11, verse 4. *“Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”*



These people elevated themselves above what God had clearly instructed them to do, which was to scatter across the face of the earth. They didn’t want to be scattered. They willfully disobeyed God’s command.

How many of us have thought that “I will make a name for myself?” Sometimes we all fall in that trap of making ourselves self important. We see people every day attempting to make their mark on this world. Streets are named after individuals. Bridges are named after a local leader. Some highways are named after individuals we have never heard of.



During the time of the Tower of Babel, they too wanted to make a name for themselves.

#### B. The Method Employed

To accomplish this plan, they decided to build a monument to their cause. *“Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens;”*

They wanted to be self-sufficient and independent of God and His protection. They wanted to build a city of safety and a tower of hope. They were self-righteous. Those that are self-righteous always seek to establish their own righteousness.



But those that trust in the Lord will seek Him first and then all these things will be added to the believer.



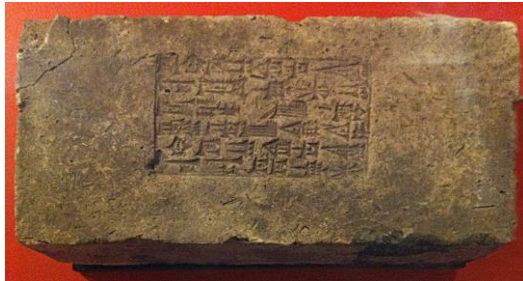
### C. The Means Used

They intended to accomplish this through the making of bricks. “*Let us make bricks*” they said.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary gives some interesting details about the insights of the prideful and idolatrous builders of this city.

“Written Babylonian accounts of the building of the city of Babylon refer to its construction as an expression of pride ... These accounts say it was made by the same process of brick making described in Genesis 11:3.

Every brick was inscribed with the name of the Babylonian god Marduk. Also the ziggurat, the step like tower



believed to have first been erected in Babylon, was said to have its top in the heavens. This artificial mountain became the center of worship in the city, a miniature temple being at the top of the tower. The Babylonians took great pride in their building. They boasted that their city was undefeatable, and also the city of *babili* (“the gate of god”).”

The inscription on the bricks was the name Marduk, or another name for Baal, one of the false gods that people worshipped. This worship of Baal included evil, sensual, and cruel acts.

### IV. God’s Response to the Tower

Now, do you think that God would let this act of rebellion and self-centered activities continue? No.

Did God let Cain get away with bringing an inadequate sacrifice? No, he was put away from God’s presence.

Did God let His creation continue in sin? No, he flooded the earth.

Will God let man usurp God’s position? No.

#### A. The Divine Inspection

***“The Lord came down to see what they had built.”***

Everything that we do is under the watchful eye of God. He sees and knows our thoughts, heart and actions. When we elevate ourselves, our work, our plans, and even our worship, above God, then God will respond and act against us.

If we are not careful, we can become so focused on the work of our hands and what we have accomplished that we forget the purpose of man is to glorify God. It is tempting to say, “Look what I have done or what we have done.” But we need to be careful to give God the praise and glory for blessing us.

The only way to please God is through faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, ***“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”***

The people, who built the tower, were creating their own gods. They were self satisfied.

## B. Sudden Confusion

In verse five, God agreed that they were becoming a mighty people. They were united in purpose and language. As a way of breaking up this plan, God confused their language and they were not able to continue the work.

The confusion that resulted was immediate. When the Spirit of God came upon those individuals, they were immediately changed. They left their vain work and gathered in common language groups and scattered across the face of the earth.



## C. Complete Dispersion

*“So the Lord scattered them abroad from over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.”*

The very thing that these people wanted, a secure place apart from God, huddled up together and not scattered, was the thing they *did not* get. Proud men labor to save themselves from being cast out by God. Many men and women, even today, pour energy, time, and money, into projects that attempt to give them a good name before God. In the end, all their work will be for nothing. In the case of Babylon, their faithless works doomed them to the life they sought to avoid.

## V. Our Lesson

Sometimes we may say that stories like the Tower of Babel are nice, but what do they have to do with me? The truth is, we are more like those in Babylon than we care to admit. We have insulated ourselves from many of the realities of life. We are often only concerned about ourselves, our plans, our projects, or our agendas. We go through life living as if we will live forever. We orient our days around selfish desires, appetites, and seeking to satisfy every whim when we already have everything.



Our nation is increasingly becoming complacent toward the things of God. The number of people in our nation that care about their relationship with God is dropping rapidly. George Barna does extensive research in the areas of religious participation in America. Studies are frequently published and report startling information.

I have been tracking participation numbers over the years. In 2004, their research found that 34% of all Americans had not attended church in the previous six months.

By 2013, that number rose to 47%. Most of that increase occurred between 2010 and 2013.

For those that are in the millennial generation (born between 1984 and 2002) that number was at 52%. The statistics showed in 2013 that the millennial generation is walking away from the traditional church.

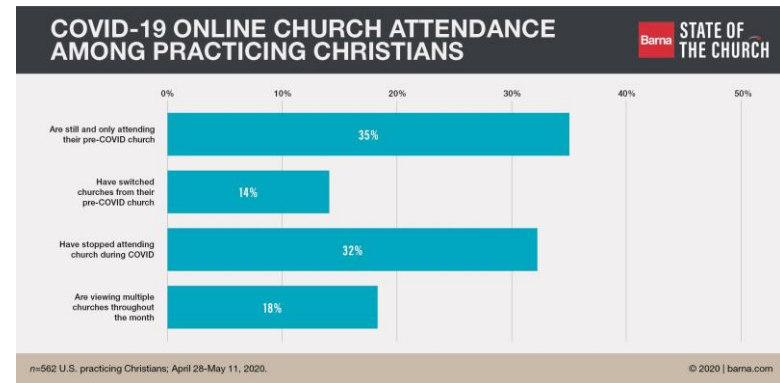
Of those that grew up in a Christian home, 59% are walking away from their faith or institutional church.<sup>1</sup> This was in 2014. I am sure those numbers are higher today.

In a recent article published by Barna in July 2020<sup>2</sup>, they report the advent of COVID-19 has caused a lot of people to rethink their participation in weekly worship services. As of May 2020, during the initial peak of social distancing measures, nearly half of churched adults had not streamed online service in the past four weeks, and one in three practicing Christians had simply stopped attending church during COVID-19.

A Lifeway survey released last month indicated for churches that have resumed in person services, church attendance has risen to only 70% of the pre-pandemic attendance numbers. Both reinforce the idea that churches have lost 30% of their participants.

Barna goes on to say the pandemic has caused people to change their online attendance to their home church.

- 35% are still attending their Pre-COVID church.
- 14% have switched churches from their pre-COVID church.
- 32% have stopped attending church during COVID.
- 18% are viewing multiple churches throughout the month.



A lot of people are asking these important questions.  
What is the future of our church here at Spilman?  
What is the future of the larger church?  
What type of worship service will attract young people?

The tension between worship styles continues to be an important driver in attracting the millennial generation. Barna reports that 62 percent of the elder population is attracted to traditional worship services while only 38 percent of the millennial generation is. I am not sure we can arrive at a clear answer to the question, “What is the future of the church?”

*(I have copies of the Barna article if you would like to read more about it.)*

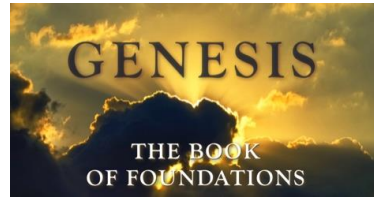
We may become despondent about the future of the church. We may even become discouraged about the affairs of the world around us. Let me say something very clearly so you don’t misunderstand me. **We are called to be faithful even if the world around us seems to be falling apart.**

<sup>1</sup> 5 Reasons Millennials Stay Connect to Church, Barna Group, accessed 6/28/2014

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/worship-preferences/> (accessed 8/3/2020)

We need to remember; God is still sovereign over the affairs of man. God punishes rebellion and sin. When God gives a command, He intends for us to believe it and follow it. If we fail to do that, we suffer the consequences.

These first eleven chapters in the book of Genesis are foundational to our understanding of ...



who God is,  
how our world came to be,  
where the animals came from,  
how man was created in the image of God,  
how the first family was designed  
– One Man and One Woman,  
how sin entered into paradise,  
how God will redeem His creation,  
how the flood changed the shape of our world,  
where the various family groups came from,  
where the different languages came from,  
and who our ancestors are.

Many people who scoff at the idea of God reject these first eleven chapters in Genesis. They dismiss them as fairy tales and good bedtime stories.

End Times People Will Scoff @ God

"They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, ..." 2Timothy 3:24 NLT



We need to acknowledge that there is a God and we are not it. That God does love us and He has given us this information to guide us and give us a context in which to live out our lives.

Now that this groundwork has been laid, next week we will examine how God's plan of salvation for mankind included choosing one man, Abraham from the land of Ur. Through Abraham all the world was blessed.

## LET US PRAY

Sermon outlines and quotes from:

- Handfuls on Purpose Volume 1, page 57-59.
- Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ, Lesson 15, New Tribes Mission.
- Email from David L. Boyd, about Iraq in the Bible, printed copy from Patsy Sauls of Fremont NC