

Genesis, chapter 11.

Introduction

We have been traveling line by line and verse by verse through our study in Genesis, and have been watching the narrative of Scripture move from the global scale of early human history toward a intimate focus on God's redemptive plan. Last week, as we walked through the Table of Nations, we saw how the family of Noah began to spread across the earth. Yet behind that geographical dispersion lies a heart-revealing story of human pride and divine intervention.

Now, as we step into Genesis chapter eleven and chapter twelve, we see a striking contrast. We move directly from a self-sufficient world trying to build a tower to make a name for itself, to the sovereign God who reaches down to call one man—Abram—out of spiritual darkness to bless him and make His own name known.

As we examine this rich passage together today, three major themes emerge directly from the text:

First, we will look at The Rebellion at Babel and the Confusion of Tongues, examining man's attempt to consolidate power and establish a self-exalting system in the plain of Shinar, and seeing how God in His sovereignty confounded their speech to thwart their unified rebellion and scatter them across the earth.

Second, we will trace The Call of Abram and the Patient Grace of God, following Abram's journey out of the idol-worshiping culture of Ur of the Chaldees, considering the spiritual pitfall of "halfway obedience" when his family settled in Haran, and learning how the Lord patiently shapes our imperfect faith into a life of surrender.

Finally, we will examine The Promises of God and the Fragility of the Flesh, beholding the magnificent sevenfold covenant God established with Abram—which points directly to the ultimate blessing of salvation through Jesus Christ—while taking a sober look at Abram's detour into Egypt, reminding us that our ultimate security rests never in our own perfection, but in the unwavering faithfulness of our God.

Mankind's highest efforts to reach heaven through works only lead to confusion, but the true God reaches down to us in mercy to give us a brand-new beginning.

Bible Study

Look with me at Genesis chapter eleven, starting in verse one...

The Rebellion at Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)

In the first few verses of chapter 11, we find the world settling in the plain of Shinar. The Bible tells us that at this time, "the whole earth was of one language and one speech" (Genesis 11:1). Many scholars believe this was likely Hebrew, as the names we've encountered so far carry deep Hebrew meanings.

But notice the heart of the people in verse 4. They said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4, NKJV).

Do you see the problem there? God had commanded man to fill the earth, but man said, "No, let's congregate. Let's consolidate our power. Let's make a name for ourselves." This was the birth of a man-made religious system—the beginning of "Babylon," which throughout Scripture represents the world's system in opposition to God.

The Confusion of Tongues

God sees this and, in His sovereignty, He "comes down" to look at it. Now, we know God is omnipresent, but the writer uses this language to show us that even man's "highest" achievements are tiny in the sight of the Almighty.

To stop this rebellion, God confounds their language. Suddenly, you can't understand your neighbor. The project grinds to a halt. They called the place Babel, which sounds like the Hebrew word for "confusion." This is the origin of the different language groups we see today. It's a reminder that whenever man tries to reach God on his own terms or for his own glory, it only leads to confusion.

The Call of Abraham (Genesis 11:27–12:3)

Now the focus of the Bible narrows. We move from the history of nations to the history of one family. We meet a man named Abram (later Abraham) in the Ur of the Chaldees.

Ur was a sophisticated place, but it was spiritually dark, filled with polytheism and moon-worship. In the midst of that darkness, God speaks. Genesis 12:1 says, "Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you'".

A Work in Progress

I want you to notice something about Abram's obedience. God told him to leave his family, but Abram took his father, Terah, and his nephew, Lot, with him. They got as far as Haran and stopped. They settled there until Terah died.

Sometimes we do that, don't we? We start out in obedience to God, but we stop halfway. We "settle" in a comfortable place that isn't the Promised Land. But God is so patient. After the delay in Haran, God moved on Abram's heart again.

Pastoral Note: Don't be discouraged if your faith hasn't been perfect. Abram is the "Father of the Faithful," yet his obedience was a process. If you've been "stuck in Haran," today is the day to pack up the tent and move toward what God has for you.

The Promises of God (Genesis 12:2–3)

God gives Abram a sevenfold promise:

1. I will make you a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great.
4. You shall be a blessing.
5. I will bless those who bless you.

6. I will curse him who curses you.

7. In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

That last promise is the "Gospel in Genesis." It points directly to Jesus Christ. Through the lineage of this one man, the Savior would come to shed His blood for the sins of the world.

The Failure in Egypt (Genesis 12:10–20)

As soon as Abram gets to the land, there's a famine. What does he do? He goes down to Egypt. He didn't ask God; he just went. And while he was there, he got scared. He told his wife, Sarai, "Tell them you're my sister so they don't kill me" (Genesis 12:13).

Here is the great man of faith, lying because he's afraid. It's a reminder that our security isn't in our own character, but in God's faithfulness. Even when Abram failed, God protected Sarai and brought them back out of Egypt. God doesn't use perfect people; He uses surrendered people.

Practical Application & Challenge

For the Believer: Are you trying to "make a name" for yourself like the people at Babel, or are you seeking to make His name known? Is there a "Haran" in your life—a place of partial obedience where you've settled? I challenge you this week to take that next step of faith. Don't let fear drive you to "Egypt." Trust that the God who called you is able to sustain you.

For Those Seeking Jesus: The story of the Bible is the story of God reaching down to man. At Babel, man tried to build a tower to reach heaven, and it ended in confusion. But 2,000 years ago, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bridge the gap for us.

Jesus lived the perfect life we couldn't live. He went to the cross and shed His precious blood to pay the price for your sins and mine. He didn't stay in the grave; His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. You don't have to wander in confusion anymore.

An Invitation

If you don't know Him, you can give your life to Him right now. It's as simple as turning from your own way and saying, "Lord, I'm a sinner in need of a Savior. I believe You died for me and rose again. Come into my life."

This is the best decision you could ever make. There is no greater peace than knowing your life is in the hands of the One who created you and gave His life for you.

When we talk about "giving our life to Jesus," we are essentially responding to what He has already done. Here are several passages from the New King James Bible that walk through this beautiful process of salvation. You can read these, pray through them, and let them take root in your heart.

1. Acknowledge the Need

We first have to realize that our own "towers" (our efforts and works) can't reach God because of our sin.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23, NKJV)

2. Understand the Remedy

The "wages" or the result of our sin is separation from God, but He has provided a gift through the Cross.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23, NKJV)

3. Behold the Love of God

This isn't about a religion; it's about a relationship fueled by the greatest love imaginable.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8, NKJV)

4. Respond in Faith

Salvation isn't something we earn; it's something we receive by trusting in who Jesus is and what He did when He shed His blood for us.

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9, NKJV)

A Simple Prayer of Surrender

If you're ready, you can pray something like this right now. The words aren't a "magic formula"—it's the attitude of your heart that God is looking at:

"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I cannot save myself. I thank You for loving me so much that You went to the cross for me. I believe You shed Your blood for my sins and that You rose from the dead, proving You are the Lord of all. I turn from my way of doing things and I put my trust in You. Fill me with Your Spirit and help me to follow You from this day forward. Amen."

What's Next?

If you just prayed that, the Bible says there is a party going on in heaven right now! Your next steps are simple but vital for your growth:

- Get into the Word: Start reading the Gospel of John. It's a great place to see the heart of Jesus.
- Talk to God: That's all prayer is—just talking to Him like a friend.
- Find a Fellowship: Find a Bible-teaching study group where you can grow with other believers.