

Remnant Life Church
October 20, 2019
How Far Along is Your Tower?
Gen 11:1-9

Last week: A Recipe for Dealing with Impossible

- The children of Israel at the shores of the Red Sea
- Egyptian army bearing down on them
- An “impossible” situation

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26

- Don’t be afraid
- Stand Firm
- Move On

This morning we will go back into Genesis to a somewhat familiar story

- But what I classify (at least to myself) as a “B” level story
 - Not a reference to their value and importance
 - But to how well they are known by people from both within and without the church
- Noah and the Flood; Abraham and Isaac; Sodom and Gomorrah; Joseph and his coat of many colors – all examples of “A” level stories in Genesis

READ – Gen 11:1-9

Context of the story:

1. The account we just read in **Genesis 11** is called a transition or a bridge story
 - a. The time of the event is following the flood
 - i. Go has made His covenant with Noah (mankind)
 - ii. We are introduced to the sons of Noah
 - iii. Noah’s life comes to an end
 1. *Altogether Noah lived 950 years, an then he died. Gen 9:29*
 2. Third oldest behind Methuselah (969) and Jared (962)
 - b. The world has begun to become repopulated (Table of Nations in **Gen 10**)
 - c. Abraham is then introduced (as Abram) in **Gen 12**
 - d. In between Noah and Abraham is the story of the Tower
2. The location of the tower is given as the plain in Shinar
 - a. This is in the southern region of Mesopotamia
 - b. In modern-day Iraq
 - c. It was initially occupied by the Sumerians around 3000 BC
 - i. The Sumerian language was the first to be used internationally as the language of trade and governmental agreements
 - ii. It was from this group of peoples that Babylon rose to become the greatest city of that region

There are many in theological circles who consider the tower story to be just that, a story

- They claim that it was inserted into the Bible to explain the origin of the many languages of the world
- Others say it is a parable to warn against the pride of man's heart
- But there is proof beginning with the work of Philologists (a person who studies literature and language) that a common global language once existed
- There is historical confirmation starting with ancient writers including the Greek historian Abydenus as well as Plato that tell of an ancient tower, how it angered the gods (sic), and the people were scattered through the confusion of language
- There is archeological confirmation with digs that have confirmed the presence of a great structure built under the original city of Babylon south of Bagdad, Iraq

But it is not the proof of the existence of the Tower that is of the greatest importance

- Although physical proof of the accounts of the Scripture are becoming more and more prevalent all the time
- It is what we learn from the story for our lives today

Let's look at what the Bible tells us again about what they were doing:

1. **Verse 1:** The whole world had one language
 - a. This only makes sense since Noah and his family all spoke the same language
 - b. The line of all people came from the 8 people in Noah's family (Noah, his wife, 3 sons and their wives)
 - c. The Japhethites, the Hamites, and the Semites
 - d. *From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood - Gen 10:32b*
2. **Verse 2:** As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there
 - a. That gives us the physical location
 - b. In the geographic region of Mt. Ararat in Turkey
3. **Verse 3** – The plan is hatched
 - a. Make bricks and bake them thoroughly (11:3)
 - b. Moses was not just writing for his time but the people of the future in Israel
 - c. In the region of the Israelites they did not use bricks as much since stone was more plentiful
 - d. Instead of stone, tar for mortar (11:4)
4. **Verse 4a** – Their pride leads them to want to come face-to-face with God
 - a. This thinking or objective is strictly forbidden by God
 - b. **Ex 33:20** (God is speaking to Moses and tells him) *...you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.*
 - c. What they want to accomplish is something God will not allow
5. **Verse 4b** – they want to make a name for themselves
 - a. **Ex 6:6-8** Moses is reporting the conversation he had with God just prior to God freeing them from the Egyptians
 - b. *Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will*

take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'

- c. They were not content to be the people of God they wanted to be their own people
- d. In other words, independent from God repeating the first sin in the Garden of Adam and Eve

What do we learn from **verse 4**?

- First, they decided to build a city, but God did not tell them to do it
 - **Ps 127:1** - *Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain.*
 - What have you tried to do in your life without God's direction and found it to all be in vain (or of no value)?
 - This would not be the City of God (what Jerusalem is called) it would be a city of man
- Second, they wanted to make a name for themselves
 - Not only did they not want to be a people of God, as we saw earlier...
 - ...but they were most concerned most about was their own glory and reputation
 - If you can ever get to the place that you do not care about your reputation or what other people might think or say about you, you will have fully emptied yourself and can then be filled with the things of the Spirit of God
- Third, they wanted to create their own religion
 - "...to the heavens" should not be read as the goal of their building project
 - It is, in the original language, the dwelling place of God
 - In other words, a place of worship
 - But not of God, of themselves and their accomplishment

What we have in this verse alone is the fullest description of the pride of man's heart – the very root of all evil

- Acting independently of God
- Promoting themselves above all things
- Replace God with their man-made religion

This is also the very portrait of 21st century man

What must be remembered, however, is found in the first words of the 5th verse

- *But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building – 4:5*
- In all the splendor of what men thought they were doing, God had to come DOWN to see it
- **Isa 40:22** - *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

But the good news this morning is that in all the arrogance of the people who wanted to build a tower, a monument to themselves

- God still loved them

- He could have wiped them out – not a flood but fire, earthquake, disease, simply end existence
- Instead he simply confused their languages and let them go on

So, how far along is your tower this morning?

- What plans are you in working on right now that have nothing to do with God in your life?
- How much of what you do is to make a name for yourself instead of to honor God?
- Does God have the place in your life as the first priority or are you in the midst of, like the builders of the tower, creating a ‘new religion’ that is focused on your life?

The recipe for dealing with impossible we spoke of last week is also at the heart of what we have learned this morning

- Don't fear anything...except God
 - Why can we live without fear? Because of God's promise -
 - *Isa 41:10 - So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
 - Why fear God?
 - *Prov 9:10 – ...the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...*
- Stand still and listen to God...but you must ask him before you start building
 - The prophet Samuel's final address to the people of Israel
 - *I Sam 12:16 - Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes!*
 - David tells the people
 - *I Chron 16:10-11 ...let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.*
- Move on...but you must follow His direction for your life
 - The people building the tower did not put their trust in the Lord yet that is what we read in **Proverbs 3**
 - *Prov 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit (or acknowledge) Him and He will make your paths straight*

Our culture today tells us that independence is the sign of great strength, but it is pride being manifest in our lives

- We are to rely upon and trust no one except ourselves
- Look out for number 1
- Always asking the question, what is best for me?

In reality, independence is to lean on your own understanding

- If trusting in God is what makes our paths straight...
- What will leaning on our own understanding bring us?
- Paths that are crooked and filled with great difficulty – why?
- *Ps 10:4 - In his pride, the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

If the Holy Spirit has brought conviction to your heart this morning and you have realized you are in the midst of building your own tower...

- Stop the construction
- Repent of your desire for independence from God
- Humble yourself before Him
- Seek or ask God for His direction in all things of your life

Jer 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.