

On Spiritual Spankings and Scatterings

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[0 : 00] No, we need to unpack it, don't we? Thank you, brother. So we'll put the sermon slide up there as you turn to Genesis 11.

We have been working our way through Genesis verse by verse now for a number of months. And we finally come to chapter 11, which is pivotal because chapter 11 kind of sums up the first 10 chapters and then introduces us to what God is about to do in a very unique way as he moves his blessing, focused down on the one man, Abraham, and then promises that all of those people who will come after Abraham and love the Lord and serve the Lord will be in his lineage.

That's amazing. Even Gentiles will be grafted into the same faith that will define Abraham's life.

Now, as we get ready to read from chapter 11, I'll throw my title up here for you.

How about that? On spiritual spankings and scatterings. Because that's, you know, I could have just named this the Tower of Babel. And that's fine, but that's kind of boring.

And so we want to talk about what this means that God is showing us this tower situation and all that took place around the tower.

[1 : 24] It really does have to do with that title. These people are going to be spiritually spanked by the Lord. And that spanking is going to look like scattering.

So Genesis chapter 11, verse one. Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

Now, can you imagine that all these people on the face of the planet right now, and they all spoke the same language. No matter where you went in the different regions of Mesopotamia, these people spoke the same language.

It came about as they journeyed east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there, or another word for settled would be dwelt there.

They took up permanent residence. They said to one another, come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they used brick for stone and they used tar for mortar.

[2 : 27] They said, come, let us build for ourselves a city and the tower whose top will reach into heaven and let us make for ourselves a name.

Otherwise, we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

The Lord said, behold, they are one people and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do.

And now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them or beyond their reach. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth. And they stopped building the city.

[3 : 35] Therefore, its name was called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth. And from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Now, how many times have you heard repeated and emphasized by my reading the whole earth? So this is a global reality. And whatever we're going to take in and understand about what God is doing here, we have to see it as a global perspective, a global reality that's taking place.

The scripture is taking pains to make sure that we understand that. Now, friends, Genesis 11 gives us the reason for the sudden development of the different people groups or what we would understand modern times as the nations of the world.

How did that come about? How did it come about that all these different languages developed?

When did that happen? Was it a gradual thing? How did the nations form?

And what's the purpose of the boundaries of nations? What is all of that about? How did it come about? The reason we understand for God making the divisions of the nations of the world and scattering the people is given here.

[5 : 02] The reason that God did that is the division and dispersion of rebellious people associated with the Tower of Babel.

So Babel is forever in our history as a place of rebellion. The question comes, was the tower real? Is this myth? Many people think it is.

The Bible says that this was real. We understand and take Genesis 11 in the same way that we've taken the other 10 chapters of Genesis. We understand this to be a literal historical reality.

Real people, real events, a real tower, a real city in history. And you would think, well, if that's the case, is there any evidence to suggest that this kind of stuff took place?

Well, whether there was or not, I don't need anybody to dig up anything out of the ground to prove to me that the Word of God is true. This is the same God who saved me and took me from sin and death into life with Him.

[6 : 09] And so I tell you what, I choose to believe Him. And I choose to believe that this is His Word and it's sufficient for life and godliness. And yet, we do have evidence.

We do have evidence. Beyond the testimony of the Lord. Again, not that we need that evidence to trust the testimony of God, but it's a neat thing that God allows us to see these things in real time and in real life.

In fact, let me offer this to you in the way of introduction before we start delineating the first point here together. There are about seven, maybe eight, depending on which archaeologist you talk to, sites considered to be the location of the Tower of Babel.

And so I want to introduce you to a man named Doug Petrovich. Doug and I were actually at seminary, out at Master's Seminary at the same time. And so I knew of Doug.

When I saw him, when I was doing this research and I saw him, I went, ah, I know that guy. And so I've been following some of what Doug's been doing and I didn't realize where he had gone into work.

[7 : 19] Doug has devoted his entire life to becoming an expert on Mesopotamian culture at this time in history. His entire adult life has been devoted to this.

He is one of the lead research archaeologists across the globe in this particular stuff. Really proud of Doug. He's done a great job.

He has thoroughly studied the potential sites. And out of a lifetime, an adult lifetime of research, only one site has the necessary biblical criteria for the tower.

However, that location is the ancient city of Eridu in southeastern Mesopotamia and what we know as modern day Iraq.

Eridu is the ancient name of the city of Babylon. Archaeological evidence shows that the city of Eridu was, get this, abruptly abandoned at the same period in history as the Bible's mention of the Tower of Babel.

[8 : 26] Oh, what a coincidence. You're going to find lots of coincidences happening this morning in the Lord, right? And we understand that this is the testimony of the true and sufficient Bible.

Now, according to Doug's research, Eridu was the center of a major human expansion to all points on the compass, north, south, east, and west, at this particular juncture of human history.

So that this abrupt expansion can be clearly seen in the sudden appearance of new cities and in civilizations across Mesopotamia.

So if you think of Turkey and Iraq and Iran and areas of Saudi, what is now Saudi Arabia and all of that area and what we call the Middle East and beyond, the Euphrates River, the Tigris River, all of that takes in this area that we're talking about.

Now, it was at this very time that the archaeological evidence reveals multiple languages. And the beginning of written language just suddenly appearing in the historical record.

[9 : 43] Just bam, like that. Even secular archaeologists, historians, and researchers recognize this reality. It's just they can't explain it. But the Bible does.

The artifacts of this time show that settlements of people with common shared cultural knowledge and experiences just began popping up everywhere.

This is what the record shows. Another sudden anomaly was that these new settlements were structured, now get this, in isolation from existing people groups around them.

And in many cases, if not most cases, these settlements, these new settlements were done on virgin soil. Places where people had never been before. And all of a sudden now we've got all of these different people groups and these cultures just popping up together.

And here's the interesting part about this. People were deliberately grouping themselves to be apart from other groups of people. In other words, what the historical record had showed before this was that people were bound together in communities.

[11:01] And now we're finding that there are all these new communities springing up that want to be distanced from the other communities. And we find the signs of fortresses and defensive works and all kinds of activity in war.

We see the evidence of that. And so what it's telling us is that the true account of Scripture explains that when you've got people with all these different languages, all of the sudden that's happening and they're dividing up.

They don't know how to communicate with each other. They don't trust each other. They don't see each other as friend anymore. And so that's why we have this happening. Again, this is what the research issue.

We don't need the research to prove the truth of the Bible, do we? But it's kind of neat that we can dig up all of this stuff and go, oh, look at this. This is what this means. And then those of us who believe in the Bible go and read it and say, yeah, read this and you'll get the history of how that happened.

I love this kind of stuff. You guys know that I love this kind of history. Now, here's the thing about applying all of this to where we are today. Genesis 10 informed us how God divided and dispersed the people.

[12:16] God assigned them different languages. All right. We know that's how he did it in chapter 10. So chapter 10 was a little picture that we kind of got a summary for of what would happen in chapter 11.

It's kind of a precursor, a preview of what God would do in chapter 11. But in Genesis 11, God shows us why, not how, but so much why the language barrier and the scattering were both necessary expressions of God's judgment and his mercy.

And I want to try to bring those out for you. How was this judgment and how was it mercy? It might not sound like mercy on the front of it. So by turning from God and to themselves, society was showing signs of false worship under the tyrant Nimrod.

Do you for those of you who were here last week, you remember the big deal? Why made a Nimrod, the first kind of despot leader who is behind several aspects of this time in history and what we see happening in this central region of human culture.

Remember, Nimrod was the guy who pulled everybody together and by sheer force of will bound them together in these common building projects where the first cities were springing up.

[13:50] And this is exactly what we find in the archaeological data and research. We find the oldest cities here. In fact, Eridu in modern archaeology is in competition with Jericho as being the oldest city ever discovered.

They think Eridu might be the first city that humans ever built. Well, that's exactly what the Bible tells us it is. And so for me, the competition between is Jericho the first or is Eridu the first?

I'm going to go with the Bible and say Eridu is the first or Babylon. This is what we're looking at in the historical record. One of the things that Nimrod did in binding these people together was he began to invent and introduce false gods.

And so many of what we understand to be the Canaanite gods of that particular period were invented by Nimrod. And now they've got to have a way of kind of going into depth with the development of what they want to do with these false gods.

Now, we all know that the false god thing came from Satan, right? Ultimately, he stands behind everything that is false and all that's a lie. We saw that last week.

[15:11] I read the scriptures to you describing the devil that way and talking about the way he operates in our lives. So we know who's ultimately behind this. Nimrod is the servant of the devil in these things.

Now, I don't know that Nimrod realized that. I think what Nimrod is doing here is he recognizes that developing these false gods is going to help him control the people better. Because it keeps him as the expert in authority.

Why? Because he invented them. And so now he's going to use that to keep his thumb on the people. This is what's going on. Here's the main thing I want you to hold on to as we get into our first point and develop the topic together as we move through the text of scripture in this passage. Hold on to the main idea that what we're talking about here behind the scenes of the tower and the city and the industry of the people is this.

This is all about the expression of false worship. What is fueling all of this? False worship.

[16:16] False worship. That's the issue that we're dealing with this morning. And that's what the tower represents. That's what this entire culture and society of people represent.

And God's going to need to do something about it. And he does. And it is an act of his mercy that he intervenes in all of this and reveals to the people the corruption of their pride and what they've done in creating these false gods.

So the very first thing that we'll deal with in the way of these signs that I talked about, the fact that turning from God into themselves began to show signs of that false worship under Nimrod.

Here's the first that we'll deal with. The first sign is that they corrupted God's blessing of communication. Communication. Language is a gift of God.

Language is something that God invented. God gave us a voice box and he gave us a brain and for all that to work together so that we can put words together and communicate. It's an amazing gift from the Lord.

[17:25] But notice the emphasis of the text in verse one. Now, the whole earth used the same language and the same words. Same is the the issue here.

This literally would read and it's a little bit comical to hear it this way. This would literally read in the Hebrew. They were a people of one lip. One lip.

And that's simply a way of describing the mouth and the fact that we have words that come out of our mouth or be from between our lips. They were one lipped. One language.

The same words. That's what they're dealing with in this particular moment in history. Notice that what I said earlier is being emphasized.

The whole earth used the same language and the same words. Just let that settle on you a little bit. But today we're so used to growing up in a world where people speak different languages across different places.

[18:26] You know, I was raised in the deep south. And if I if I just kind of went back into my roots and started talking deep south to you right now, I'd lose about 90 percent of you. You'd need an interpreter.

Those were the people that I was. So even within our own country, we have dialects, don't we? We have different ways of emphasizing different words. As Suzanne and I often will reflect on and laugh about the time we were in Georgia in the deep south and we were ministering in a church and we had some people from the north.

We won't call them Yankees from the north. Come down and invade. I mean, visit our place. And they were in our church and they were in our Sunday school class. And we would have a very, very dyed in the wool southerner get up and he would do the announcement.

And talk about the different things we were going to do as a Sunday school class and meetings and places like that. And so we met with these people who were visiting from the north and we were taught.

What did you think? You know, where are you from? And all this kind of stuff. And they told us in that moment, they said, look, we just we got to let you know. We're very interested in being a part of what's going on here.

[19:39] But we couldn't understand a word he said. But we think we think he was talking about someplace. We're going to have some kind of fellowship. We caught that. Can you tell us where that is? So the next Sunday, we kind of did this thing where we had him do it and then we had an interpreter for him.

So, you know, this is the reality of where we live. And if you've ever heard other languages or tried to study other languages, it's very hard, isn't it? The older you get, the tougher it is to understand languages.

Suzanne and I are preparing and hoping and praying that we will get to go to Poland again in the summer in August, early August. And when we get over to Poland, I use an interpreter.

And it is a it is a it is a very kind of weird dance as I teach like I'm doing now. And I do it in in sometimes half a sentence and then I wait and I listen to him and it doesn't sound anything like what I say.

It is. So, you know, I ask a guy, I said, how are the interpreters doing? And the guy who was there who spoke fluent Polish, he said, no, dude, they're actually doing a great job of bringing out the nuance of what you're trying to say.

[20 : 51] So you just got to trust that, right? These people have corrupted communication, even though God has given it to them as a gift of his grace, just like all the commands of God and the will of God are gifts of God's grace to a people who wouldn't know any better if he didn't tell us.

We just keep following the same lies. The point is this. The people could have and they should have used the gift to honor the Lord. They could have used this to bless each other.

That's not what Nimrod's doing. But because of their corrupted hearts, the people are using this gift from the Lord to exalt themselves as they pursue life without God.

Now, this is the temptation that you and I face across the spectrum of life, constantly taking the blessings of God and the mercies and graces of God and turning those things into selfish pursuits. Ways that we use to exploit other people, manipulate, control or just pursue selfish pleasure as an end in itself. All the while kind of throwing in God's face that the blessings we live under, like being able to breathe his air, is something we take for granted and use for ourselves.

[22 : 07] This should humble us and cause us to worship the Lord, but our corrupt hearts won't allow that. So look, folks, what we see in the tower episode is simply this. It's further evidence of Noah's prophecy about the spiritual rebellion of the Hamites.

For those of you who've been here, you remember that? Noah made this prophecy and said, Ham, because you've done this and discredited and dishonored your father, your people will be known for this kind of prideful rebellion across history.

And that's exactly what we've seen. In fact, one commentator noted this, and I thought it was helpful. It is Ham's descendants that shall begin the defilement of religion in the world.

It shall start at Babel. Ham shall father the progeny of all false religions. Yep, this is where it all started. So behind the spiritual rebellion of the tower of Babel is the one and same issue of the depravity of the human heart.

We're studying that on Wednesday night. We'll be looking at that in greater depth this coming Wednesday. You're welcome to join us at 630 sharp. What we're dealing with is this repeatedly revealed issue of human depravity in the first 10 chapters of Genesis.

[23 : 27] Now we come to chapter 11 and it kind of brings it all together and sums it up in this one incident where all these people band together. And they say, we're going to go build a city for ourselves.

And within the city, we're going to build a giant tower. And I'm about to tell you why they wanted to do all of this. Why did they? Why was this so important to them? Well, look, we can see the testimony of Scripture as to what's going on in these people behind the scenes.

Obviously, they wouldn't have admitted to what I'm about to share with you now. But from Adam and Eve to Cain and Lamech to Ham and Nimrod. These are the different characters that have kind of exposed this spirit of rebellion since we've been studying.

This is an issue of prideful spiritual rebellion, which is summed up by God in Genesis 6. Right? So we're not going to just put our label on it.

We're going to let God label what he sees going on in these people that serves as the reason behind the city, the tower and all that they're doing as a culture. And what does God say?

[24 : 33] What has he already told us? Then the Lord saw. Right? Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth.

And that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was what? Only evil continually. Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God.

And the earth was filled with violence. And so what did God do? God looked on the earth. That is, he looked on the cultures, the people. And behold, it was corrupt.

What a word. For all flesh, all people had corrupted their way upon the earth. Now that's Genesis 6. And so that's right before the flood.

He's giving us this to tell us, here's why I'm bringing the flood. Now he's seeing the same spirit of rebellion in the tower. But he's already promised I'll never destroy the earth again with water.

[25 : 33] So he won't do that. Well, what is he going to do? The tower incident is further proof that God's assessment of human nature is true and enduring.

Oh, we don't like to hear that assessment, especially in our unbelief. We don't like God telling us we're proud. We're lustful. We're greedy. We're selfish.

We're blind. We're deceived. We don't like that. But that's God's assessment. It doesn't just stay there, though. There's more to this.

If God left us, left us to ourselves, if he left us without his gracious initiative, mankind would descend into a darkness of life that we would not survive.

So left to ourselves, our own hearts would destroy us. Again, we don't like hearing that. We want to think people are good by nature. Well, that's not the testimony of the Bible.

[26 : 34] If we were good people, we wouldn't need a Savior dying on a cross and bleeding out to rescue us from sin. Good people would just be good and save themselves.

That's not the way it works, according to Scripture. Left to ourselves, our own hearts would destroy us. In addition to what we read in Genesis, Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, said it this way, The hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.

Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full, full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.

Folks, that's a strong statement, isn't it? About human nature. This is what we're talking about. This is what we are without Jesus.

Every one of us. And we will prove it in our lives in terms of what we say, what we do, what we pursue, what's important to us. We will ooze this nature in every pore of our being, apart from God saving us in Jesus.

[27 : 48] Let me ask you a question to get you to think about this with me, because I think all of us at some point in our lives as adults have probably experienced something like this, so I don't want you to feel alone in it.

Look, have you ever been so shocked and so dismayed with the behavior of someone that you were compelled to explain their actions by saying something like this?

That's just insane. That's just insane. Okay, now go another one with me. Have you ever looked back on your own actions or words and said, was I insane?

We also say it this way. Have you lost your mind? Are you with me? Have you seen this in yourself? You've seen it in other people? And sometimes it's not a laughing matter.

Sometimes people say and do things that are so hurtful, that are so deeply troubling, that are so disrupting to our lives. We step back and look at it and go, I just don't know how people do this.

[28 : 52] I don't know how people live like this. I don't understand where this comes from. We're so shocked by the insanity of what we see and what we hear. Well, folks, listen here. This is what the Bible is telling us in this passage.

Sin is insane. This is insanity that these people are living in. It's insane. It's foolish. It's senseless. It's irrational. We could say it's absurd. Well, this is what is meant by God looking, looking on mankind and saying, Behold, all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

All flesh had corrupted their way. And that's what I'm preaching on this morning. This instance of corruption. Now, more, more of this heart corruption and spirit of rebellion comes out in verse 2 as these people, as a group, move east from Ararat.

Remember, the ark came to rest on Ararat and people began to settle in that immediate area. And so, as they move from there, Shinar, which is mentioned as the place they moved to, Shinar is in ancient Sumer.

[30 : 13] And this is where the Bible tells us the Garden of Eden was said to be. Now, the Garden of Eden has long been wiped off the face of the map by the flood. So, you'll never find any evidence of the Garden of Eden.

But this is the same region where the Garden was. And so, they move into this area and obviously, this was a very lush area. Things are growing back quickly because we have these rivers that are converging and they settle in this valley between them, very fertile.

Everything's ready to just explode in the way of harvest. This is where they move to. But now, the issue in this because you might think, well, what's wrong with that?

They got to settle somewhere. Well, that's the issue though. It's the settling there that's unsettled God. Their intentions in settling are exposed in what comes next.

So, this isn't some just innocent sojourn where the people have gathered together and said, let's love each other and let's move off and build a city and take care of each other and thrive in the Lord.

[31 : 18] Not quite. So, this brings us to the second sign that we're going to deal with. It's the corrupting of God's blessing of community. They move right into that and expressing that.

So, here's where their idol worship and apostasy come into clearer focus. If you look with me, verse 2, it came about as they journeyed east toward Shinar that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there.

They took up permanent residence there. Why is that such a big deal? Well, look at the motive behind that settling and it'll come out better. They said to one another, come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.

Again, sounds so innocent. Just doesn't sound like any big deal. Of course they would do that. Then they used brick for stone and they used tar for mortar. Okay, I don't know why we need to know that, but there it is.

Well, I'm going to tell you why we need to know that. They said, come, let us build for ourselves a city. Remember, this is all a first. Then, we're going to build a tower in the city whose top will reach into heaven and let us make for ourselves a name.

[32 : 38] There's your hubris. There's your pride. Otherwise, what? We will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. Well, what did God tell them to do?

Scatter. What do they not want to do? Scatter. This is rebellion. It is open rebellion led by Nimrod and he's influencing an entire culture of people.

An entire society is willing to follow him. Have you ever asked yourself what in the world were the conditions in Nazi Germany that allowed a man like Hitler to take an entire nation and move them toward the murderous intent that they exploited on the entire world?

Millions and millions and millions of people lost their lives because of one man's pride. Right? Who got it all started? Hitler. Why did they do that?

What did Hitler say? We're going to make a name for Germany. We're not going to live in this poverty. We're not going to live under this humiliation from our loss in World War I. We're going to move out.

[33 : 42] Now, I'm not going to geek out on world wars because I love war history, but you understand that Nimrod is the first of many and we pointed that out last time.

So, what are we dealing with in this particular community? Again, this is where their idol worship comes into clear focus is in verses 3 and 4.

Notice how each verse, verses 3 and 4, how each verse begins. What do you see? Your Bible should say something along the lines of, they said. Verse 3, verse 4, they said.

Well, you know what? What they said doesn't really matter. It's what God says that matters, ultimately. From this pulpit, it doesn't matter what Jeff says. If Jeff is showing you that this is what God says, listen.

Listen closely. But if I veer off and I start going all Jeff on you, you can check out then. Now, I hope I won't do that, but if I do that, it'll just be some story or something that I want to use as an illustrative point.

[34 : 42] So, hang in there with me and look at this. As these people, they said, expresses pride. Here's why. The Bible tells us that a person's mouth speaks out of that which fills their heart.

Alright? You have a reference for that. It's Matthew 12, 34. It's also in Luke 6, 45. Matthew 12, 34. The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

You never say anything out of your mouth that doesn't come first from your heart. Where it resides and where it's birthed, your words are right here in your heart.

You speak out of who you are. Sometimes we lie. We're speaking out of our nature. Sometimes we tell the truth. We're speaking out of our nature.

Whatever it is. Well, what are they saying? What is their mouth revealing as the overflow of their heart? What does it say?

[35 : 47] Let us build for ourselves. Let us make for ourselves. Oh, they're industrious in all the wrong directions.

So here's how we can sum this up, folks. I don't want you to miss what the Hebrew's giving us here in the grammar and all. Look. Their mouths are revealing the plans of their hearts.

The mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart. The motive of the heart. Number two. Their plans are being shown in their actions. You can't see into my heart and I can't see into your heart. So how do I know what's in your heart? I just listen to you and watch your life. Your words and your actions are going to reveal to me the motives and desires of your heart because you're never going to do anything you don't really want to do.

Have you ever had anybody say this to you? Well, I didn't mean to sin. That's not really who I want to be and what I want to do, really. You have never done a single thing in your life that you didn't want to do in the way of your actions.

[36 : 48] All of your actions come out of what you want in that moment or you wouldn't do it. You may struggle with sin just like other Christians struggle with sin.

You may get after the moment and say, man, I don't want to do that. This is Paul in Romans 7, isn't it? This is the struggle.

But in that moment you wanted to do it or you wouldn't have done it. This is what we're being seen, what's being revealed. Their plans are showing in their actions and then finally their actions are revealing what they most desire.

This is the way the Bible talks about human motivation or the act of human will. How we get to the point where we say what we say and do what we do. It all starts in the matter of the thinking of the heart.

The core of your personhood. And so when we think about this build for ourselves, you see that up there emphasized on the screen? Build for ourselves. Why is he giving us this information about how they're going about building?

[37 : 59] Why is that important? Well, it wouldn't have been wasted on the original Hebrew audience who would have completely picked up on and understood why this is being emphasized. In terms of build and make, let me take that apart for you for just a little bit.

The people are investing themselves in a building project never done before. Remember, they've been told don't settle, scatter, move, keep moving, go about filling the earth.

Remember that? Moses here, and this passage is full of this, Moses here uses a Hebrew play on words. We're going to see this a number of times before we get to verse 9.

A Hebrew play on words and he does it to emphasize the innovative and extraordinary efforts these people are going to in order to establish this city and build this tower.

So, this reads more literally this way. You see it up there on the screen? Let us brick bricks. Let us burn to a burning.

[39 : 10] That's the literal rendering of the Hebrew here. The repetitive nature of it, the redundant nature of it is for emphasis. Moses is trying to highlight the incredible industrious efforts these people are going to.

In this particular case, they're actually employing some new technology to make sure that this all comes off. You'll notice in the text where it says, and they used brick for stone at the end of three and they used tar for mortar.

Does any of your translations say bitumen? Alright, bitumen. So, what are we talking about here? Bitumen is a hard tar. tar. It's similar to what you and I would call asphalt.

It's very, very durable. So, they made these, listen now, they made these super hardened bricks because clay was abundant and stones were scarce in this region.

Again, what's happening here, they are intent on building something that will endure and that is indicative of their desire to make a name for ourselves.

[40 : 25] They want their name to endure and so they want to build a city that will endure the test of time. And so, what they're doing in this new technology is they're taking bricks and doubling down on the firing process to make them especially durable and hard.

Nobody had ever done that before. Archaeology bears this out. It's amazing. When you read the research I read and see that even secular guys are saying, yep, there it is. Folks, listen, there is a place in Eridu where they have excavated the walls of what they think is the first city of Eridu because there were a number of them built over generations up, not immediately following Eridu. For hundreds of years after the dispersion, archaeology tells us that the city laid waste. It was stopped suddenly and they have the evidence that they just walked away from it.

Secular people don't know why. Right? They just walked away and for hundreds of years there was no building there. But then in successive times it was built up.

They actually, you can go online and see a picture of some of the excavation of an entire wall from the city of Eridu. And as you look down that wall you can see those bricks look like they were made yesterday.

[41 : 44] Some of them still have the blue paint on them from the original. these people are serious about their name enduring.

This is why we have this verse in the Bible. God is telling us they are going to extraordinary extra effort to make sure that they build something that will outlast them because they want the world to know we were here.

It's all about me. It always has been. It's all about me. This is what they want to do. Build an enduring name.

Now considering their rebellious hearts these two verses could be summed up like this. Just listen to this. Come let us join forces and turn our collective energies into thwarting the will of God and throwing off his authority over us.

How do we know that? Because they say right here if we don't do this we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth and that ain't what we want. No matter what God says we want to do our own thing so build and make a name for ourselves and go to great effort to do it.

[43 : 02] Finally we get to this sign the corrupting God's blessing of communion. Now what I mean here in the way of communion is not how we think of communion in the way of taking communion.

The Lord's supper or the Lord's table or whatever that's not what I mean. You notice in the text it says this let us build for ourselves. I want to emphasize ourselves I've done build I've done make what about this ourselves and let us make for ourselves.

So what we're seeing here is ourselves is a focus on self and that focus on self is joined with a desire for a great city and a great tower whose top will reach into heaven.

And what this says to us is this we will worship on our own terms. We will establish our gods.

We will establish our religion. We will do what we want to do. Now it's very interesting to me and I promised that I would do this for you so I'm going to do it very quickly so I can jump back into the text but I told you I'd do this.

[44 : 16] This tower configuration is repeated around the world and it's known as a ziggurat. You've probably heard of this and some of you have studied it.

It's typically a four-sided stepped structure with an ascending staircase giving its builders closer access to what they would say were their gods or the heavens was a way of expressing the want to get closer to the gods.

Here's a picture right down the road from Eridu in Ur and this is a partial reconstruction in the excavation of the ziggurat at Ur.

Folks I want you to look how massive that is. The one at Eridu was bigger. This is an amazing feat. Now here's the interesting part to me and I've seen this for some time now for a couple of decades when I was reading about this and kind of pursuing it on my own because it's just fascinating to me.

[45 : 27] I began to realize that wait a minute all these all these structures that they're finding out in the middle of these jungles and digging up in these deserts everywhere that all of a sudden you know have you heard of the new technology I think it's called LIDAR.

They can use to look down into the ground from way up high and it strips away all of the surface material that would get like trees and stuff and it sees into the ground and it sees the outline of structures and so it tells them where to dig.

Look it up online. It's so fast. They're using it right now in jungles in South America and Central America where it's so thick and they thought they discovered so much of it and they're finding out there are tens of thousands of structures all over Central and South America where cultures millions of people are involved across those structures all those years ago.

Well guess what they're finding hidden in the jungle? Structures at this time started, ziggurats, started showing up all over the world at this time.

Just poop, poop, poop. Out of nowhere people started building these things and it is amazing how similar they are. It's believed that for many of these cultures the staircases allowed for the gods to come down to the people as well as for the people to go up to the gods.

[46 : 58] Now you and I look at that and go that is ludicrous. The idea that they could build a tower that would reach into heaven so their gods could step off out of heaven and walk down and see them.

You say, that's insane Jeff. These were brilliant people but they were spiritually dead people. And so they don't understand how to reason spiritually about the things of God because they've turned their backs away from the Lord.

Here are some examples of ziggurats in other cultures around the world that take on the same features. Four sides, the ascending staircase, the height.

Look at this. That's the ziggurat at Ur that they have reconstructed. And that's just the base. It went up from there. There's a picture online that actually shows American combat soldiers walking up that thing, that staircase, standing all up and down with their weapons and their helmets and the whole nine.

I was like, oh, look at that. Here's a ziggurat in Iran. Eridu's in Iraq. Here's one in Belize.

[48 : 18] Here's one in Guatemala. You know, that doesn't even include all of the different ziggurats that they're finding in the cultures and cities that they're finding that I've mentioned to you already.

Look at that one in Mexico. Look at the size of that. These people were smart, really smart. And they were able to do feats like this time and time again.

Now, again, people who study this, they don't understand why they're finding all these ziggurats popping up all over the world at about the same time. It's like, they're like, what in the world happened?

Well, what do you think happened? People took what they knew about building the Tower of Babel. God scattered them in their own languages. And what did they do? Repent?

Serve the Lord? Build houses of worship to Yahweh? No. What did they do? They just picked up where they left off. And that's what you see here. Folks, in these ziggurats, they would take human beings up to the top and cut their hearts out while they were still alive.

[49 : 29] They'd do that to children. Then they'd throw their bones in recessed places in the earth like giant caves and sinkholes. They wouldn't go down there because they thought that's where the spirit world was, the bad spirits.

And so they're finding all of these human remains in these giant caves and sinkholes all over this region where they've made human sacrifice of babies and people, their enemies, things.

This is the heart of man. This is what we're dealing with. Well, we move on from this. We see these different depictions.

The idea in all of it, we will reach into the heavens for ourselves. And that's the heart of the issue because it lays open the reality of their pride and their ingratitude.

Are they thankful for culture? Are they thankful for community? Are they thankful for the way that they are able to band together and do these industrious things? Are they thankful for language?

[50 : 30] No. All of this is being used and weaponized against God. Look, this is what God told them. God told them to obey three avenues of blessing.

He said, do this and you'll be blessed. I'm telling you this not to constrain you. I'm giving you these commands so that you will know the freedom that I've made you to enjoy.

Be fruitful. Multiply. Populate or literally swarm in. There's your command for them to scatter. Populate. Swarm in the earth and do that abundantly.

No. But what did the people want to do? The people rebelled and sought their own avenue of blessing. By what? We will build a city to settle in.

We will build a tower to worship in. But we won't worship God. And we will build a name for ourselves to rejoice in. So they don't rejoice in the Lord.

[51 : 29] They don't offer gratitude to God for His blessings. They don't worship the Lord because He made them in His image and gave Him these gifts. No. Now why do they say they need to do those three things?

What does it say? Otherwise, look up there on the screen, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. This is just rank, prideful rebellion. This is the spirit of Nimrod that I preached about last Sunday.

So it's the dying gasp of a doomed society because that's the same as saying, you know what? Let us build and make our own way of life according to what we think is best.

Isn't that the spirit of all sin? Lest we do all that the Lord commanded us to do. And so we say, what a deception, what foolishness, what insanity.

But anytime we're chasing sin, we're not pursuing the Lord and that's insane. To walk away from the Lord in any way, capacity or sphere is insane.

[52 : 34] But that's what we do. Well, look at what happens next. What does the text tell us? The Lord comes down. That's verse five. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

The Lord came down. Folks, listen. The Lord came down is the central idea of this passage. So as you look at these nine verses before verse 10, these nine verses, what we see in verse five is the central idea sandwiched in between the other verses.

This is where all the other verses kind of move, converge, and point to. The Lord coming down.

Notice also that he says in the verse seven, let us go down.

Do you see that? Well, don't let that be wasted on you. That's a declaration of what we understand the Godhead to be, the Trinity. Let us go down. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's very interesting, isn't it?

Now, what does he go down for? What does the text explicitly tell us? He goes down to see. To see. What do we mean?

[53 : 47] Well, this is an anthropomorphism. You've heard us use this word before. An anthropomorphism is simply a way of talking about a human characteristic attributed to or assigned to God for our understanding.

It's like saying his hands. God has us under his hands. hands. God thinks of us. Those are ways of assigning human characteristics to God so that we can better understand how he operates toward us, how he relates to us.

But we understand God is spirit. He doesn't have hands and feet and stuff like that. Eyes to see.

He's a spirit. But he came down to see.

God didn't need to come down out of heaven to earth in a physical way in order to know their plans and their deeds. He's God. He knows the hearts of all men.

But what this is telling us is this. This is a way for Hebrews to say God is in control. God is coming down and he's demonstrating his control.

[54 : 52] He's demonstrating his sovereignty in this situation. And he sees it clearly. The emphasis on he sees is God perceives what's really happening here. Even though these people are deceived, God isn't.

And so now God is going to come down. It's a way of saying God's going to bring his perspective into this deception. This melee of wickedness.

He's going to walk right into that. Boy, isn't that what Jesus did by dying on the cross? He moved right into the mess of our spiritual need. And what did he do?

Died for us. This is God coming in human form, right? The incarnation. incarnation. This is what we're seeing on a spiritual level here. In verse 6, the Lord said, Behold, they are one people and they all have the same language and this is what they began to do.

So that now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. What does that mean? Nothing they do will be impossible for them. What is he? Well, here's the deal.

[55 : 59] God sees a people united, but united in their wickedness. So their wicked hearts and their sinful deeds are on display.

They have reasoned in their hearts, spoken with their mouths and acted with their bodies against God's wisdom and will for their good. What they're rejecting is good for them, but they're so deceived and full of themselves, they won't embrace it.

Ah, so what happens? Well, the Lord comes down to see and the Lord comes down to confuse.

Friends, the name Babel is another Hebrew play on words.

I told you this text is full of it. At this particular time in Mesopotamian history, the Akkadian culture was in play. And so the Akkadian name for Babel is Babeli.

It means gate of God. And it's insight into what these people were doing. They were building their own way to the gods they invented.

[57 : 07] The tower was their gateway to God, but the God of their making. That's what they saw. I'll do this myself. I'll determine who I worship, when I worship, where I worship, how often I worship.

I hope you're not tired of hearing that, because this is what this passage is all about, and if we go through Genesis, you're going to hear it a lot more, unfortunately. It's the reality of what they're doing.

Babel is from the Hebrew word balal, and it means confusion. You might have a marginal notation in your Bible about that. It means confusion.

Babel, then, is a derisive, mocking term which describes what God did in judgment against these people. Now, what do we mean by confusing their language?

What exactly did God do with all this? Well, Jonathan Sarfati, one of the commentators that I read with this, he rendered the Hebrew here to read literally as this.

[58 : 14] They will not hear a man the language of his friend. That's how it reads kind of stiffly and literally. They will not hear a man the language of his friend. All of the sudden, people that they used to understand, now they don't.

They're looking at each other. If you can imagine, overnight, what I'm doing right now would be totally foreign to you. You'd hear me saying things and you'd go, what is going on with this dude? I can't understand things coming out of his mouth. That would be unnerving, don't you think? Would you be tempted to think, is it me? Is it me? Am I having a stroke or what?

What's going on here? Pretty unnerving, isn't it? Look, don't let this escape you. God is hitting them right at the point of their false faith.

The very thing that they're putting a lot of their confidence in and weaponizing and using against the Lord, that's exactly where God hits them. You ever had God do that to you? What you were trusting in, what you were believing in, what you were pursuing, and God just kind of yanks the rug right out from underneath your feet and there you are on your back going, yeah, well, that didn't work out too well.

[59 : 27] Maybe I should lay here and look up into heaven and start praying and talking to the Lord. Yeah, this is what God does and it's a mercy because he could just leave us in it.

But that's not what he does. He comes down and he deals with what he sees. Another commentator. Now this is, again, this isn't the end of the word play. Look what God is repetitively doing here.

Another commentator found an additional interesting aspect to the Hebrew use of the word confused. We're still unpacking what the Hebrew readers would have understood as they read this. They would have picked up on all this irony going on in the grammar and in their language. And so what did this other commentator find as an interesting aspect here according to the word confused? Look at this. The pronounced consonants of the Hebrew word confused are N, B, L. But that is the exact reverse of the pronounced consonants for the word brick.

[60 : 29] L, B, N. Now that is no coincidence. That is a grammatical construction that's being used for what? Well, the point of these word plays is this.

Going against God is a futile, foolish exercise. In other words, hear this now, God reversed the effects of the rebels' plan so that it went against them and accomplished God's plan.

I'm going to take the very thing you're trusting and looking in. We're going to use this new technology and super fire these bricks. They're going to make them hard, going to endure.

Going to make a name for ourselves. And what does God come down to do? He says, okay, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to take that brick idea, I'm going to reverse it, and we're going to confuse everything, and y'all are going to scatter, and this city is going to rot.

And that's exactly what happened. And I laugh. Get them, God. Get us all. Show us our hearts. Put us on our knees, because that's maybe when we'll look up and say, Jesus, I need you.

[61 : 42] I desperately, desperately need you. And God, if you don't show me mercy, I'm undone. Because left to myself, I'll ruin myself. And I'll live in sin and deception.

This is a mercy, guys. They wanted, look at the bottom of the screen there, they wanted to ascend to the heavens by their own will, but the heavens came down and God fulfilled his will despite them.

Isn't that something? The Hebrews would have picked up on that irony right away. The language that these people weaponized and used against God, God now turns back on them.

And what were the predictable results of God's sovereign intervention? Look at the last two verses with me. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth.

So what that tells us is Eridu was the center of this expansion. That's exactly what archaeology shows us. And what happened? They stopped building the city.

[62 : 46] Therefore, its name was called Babel, confusion, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth. And from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the entire earth.

So God shuts them down, he spansk them, and he scatters them over the face of the whole earth and he used language to thwart their rebellion.

So this was God's will for them. The tragedy was they didn't see it that way. God telling them to scatter was God's will for them for their good.

Scatter, fill the earth. Imagine what it would have been like if they hadn't rebelled and God would have made it where all of us were speaking the same language. You could go to Poland today and I wouldn't need an interpreter.

Right? They didn't see this as mercy. So God coming down is symbolic of God exercising his authority and his sovereign reign over what he's made, his creation.

[63 : 50] Nothing can thwart the will of the Lord. Nothing can thwart his purposes, his promises for his people. And boy, am I thankful for that. So look, folks, I'm going to read a passage here and we'll be done.

Listen to this. Jesus Christ is our wisdom. He is our only protection from the schemes of Satan and from the wayward desires of our own hearts.

What do we know? So we need to heed the words of the Apostle Paul about keeping ourselves, keeping ourselves in biblical perspective.

This entire message has been a contrast of ourselves and God. How do we get on God's page? And I want to read that to you as we end. If you want to follow along, I'll be in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. I'll read this passage and pray and we'll be done.

[64 : 53] 2nd Corinthians 4, 3-10. Please pick up on the emphasis here from this passage about ourselves. Verse 3, and even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

So even if our gospel, our truth message about Jesus, is criticized and condemned and rejected by unbelieving people, in whose case, these unbelievers, in whose case the God, small g, of this world has done what to them?

Blinded the minds of the unbelieving to what purpose? So that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

for we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus sake.

For God, who said light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who has shown in our hearts to do what? To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[66 : 16] But we have this treasure of knowing God and knowing Christ. We have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.

You see the exact reverse of what the people were trying to do? We are afflicted. Here's the reality of life and why people pursue sin. Because they don't want to manage life the way God says.

Life hits them and knocks them around and makes them feel inferior and all that kind of thing. And what do they do? They run deeper into themselves. We are afflicted in every way but we're not crushed.

Perplexed but we're not despairing. We're persecuted but not forsaken. Struck down and yet not destroyed. We are always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested or shown in our body.

we have died to ourselves and we live the new life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our hope and that's why we're not destroyed. Lots of stuff can happen to us in life but as we look to Jesus God puts it all in perspective for us so that we can continue to love him and pursue him and know the truth of his gospel.

[67 : 41] Will you pray with me? Father God as always we have bitten off a good bit of information this morning just in nine verses and we barely scratched the surface of your truth yet we trust the Holy Spirit to use what we've unpacked in our hearts.

And God my prayer for my beautiful and wonderful friends the people here who share in a one souled effort to live for the glory of Jesus that's why they come here each Sunday Lord.

I pray for my friends that you would use this passage of scripture to reinforce and encourage in them a spirit of obedience and a willingness to lay their lives down as Jesus said that they would deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Help us to be a faithful people seeking to be obedient out of love for you and a desire to please you because of all that you've loved us in and done for us in your son.

Let Jesus be our treasure help Jesus to be our wisdom and help us to pursue him in this life on this earth looking forward to the day that you will bring us into heaven and we will be face to face with our savior forever.

[69 : 06] In his name we pray and for his glory. Amen.