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# Genesis 11 – The Tower of Babel & The Prophetic Role of Babylon

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## I. Setting the Stage in Genesis

### 1. Big-picture structure of Genesis

- Genesis 1–11: Creation to Babel (primeval history)
- Genesis 12–50: The Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)

### 2. Review of what's been covered so far

- Creation
- Fall of Man
- Cain and Abel
- Days of Noah
- Flood of Noah
- Post-flood world (Genesis 10 – nations)

### 3. Transition moment

- Genesis 11 (Tower of Babel) closes the “first major section.”
  - From Genesis 12 on: focus shifts to Abraham and covenant promises that ultimately bless even Gentiles.
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## II. The Tower of Babel Narrative (Genesis 11:1–9)

### 1. One language, one speech (v.1)

- Scripture affirms a single original language.
- Secular theories on origins of language are largely conjecture.

### 2. Journey to Shinar (v.2)

- “They journeyed from the east and found a plain in the land of Shinar.”
- Implication: From Babylon’s perspective, the Ark’s resting place may be east (possibly in Iran), not necessarily on modern Mt. Ararat in Turkey.
- Many Ark-hunting stories are hearsay and problematic; text suggests we may be looking in the wrong direction.

### 3. Technology & materials (v.3–4)

- Brick burned thoroughly (kiln-fired) and tar/bitumen (“slime”) as mortar.
  - Strong, advanced building technology for the time.
4. **The project & the rebellion (v.4)**
- “Let us build us a city and a tower... let us make us a name, lest we be scattered.”
  - Direct disobedience: God commanded them to scatter and replenish the earth.
  - City-building as clustering in rebellion against God’s mandate.
5. **Nature of the tower**
- Not a naïve attempt to “reach” physical heaven like a child’s cartoon.
  - Best understood as a **temple/ziggurat**, probably:
    - An astrological structure
    - Often depicted with **seven levels** (for the visible planets).
  - Early humanity may have been intellectually *more* sophisticated than we assume, especially with long lifespans and overlapping generations.
6. **God’s response (v.5–9)**
- The Lord “comes down” to see the city and tower.
  - Concern: “Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” – a comment on the scope of evil unified humanity could pursue.
  - God confounds their language so they can’t understand each other.
  - They cease building; they scatter over the earth.
7. **The name “Babel”**
- Wordplay:
    - “Gate of God” / “tower to heaven” idea
    - Also associated with “confusion.”
  - Links to later reference: “in the days of Peleg the earth was divided” – likely referring to **linguistic/people division**, not primarily continental drift.
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### III. From Shem to Abram: The Genealogical Bridge (Genesis 11:10–32)

#### 1. Shem’s line after the flood

- Shem → Arphaxad → Salah → Eber → Peleg → Reu → Serug → Nahor → Terah → Abram.
- Long lifespans—hundreds of years—allowed for extended learning and overlapping generations.

#### 2. Peleg and division

- “In his days was the earth divided.”
  - Tied back to Babel and the division of languages/peoples.
3. **Focus narrowing to Abraham**
- Terah: father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran (order of mention = importance, not necessarily birth order).
  - Haran is father of Lot and dies in Ur of the Chaldees.
4. **Family details**
- Abram’s wife: Sarai (barren—highlighted for future narrative importance).
  - Nahor’s wife: Milcah, daughter of Haran.
5. **Migration from Ur to Haran**
- Terah takes Abram, Sarai, and Lot from Ur toward Canaan but stops and settles in Haran.
6. **“Homework” assignment**
- Compare **Genesis 11–12** with **Acts 7 (Stephen’s speech)**:
    - God told Abram to leave his land *and his family*.
    - Abram may not have fully obeyed at first (taking his father and pausing in Haran until Terah’s death).
    - Lessons in how God deals with partial obedience.
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## IV. Babylon in Scripture: From Genesis to Prophecy

1. **Babylon’s origin**
- Founded at Babel (Genesis 11).
  - Located in the Fertile Crescent – cradle of civilization: Sumer, Akkad, Nineveh, etc.
2. **Babylon as an ongoing biblical theme**
- Appears again in Genesis 14 in a coalition of kings.
  - Throughout Scripture, Babylon becomes:
    - Symbolic “capital” of Satan and human rebellion.
    - Fountainhead of idolatry and pagan religion.
3. **Historical Babylon**
- Later rises as a major empire in Daniel’s time.
  - Instrument of God’s judgment on Judah (70-year captivity).
  - Northern kingdom destroyed; southern kingdom judged but preserved for Davidic covenant.
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## V. The Doom of Babylon: Prophesied but Not Yet Fulfilled

### 1. Key prophetic passages

- Isaiah 13–14
- Jeremiah 50–51

### 2. Features of prophesied destruction

- Shall be “as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” – sudden and cataclysmic.
- “Never be inhabited,” “from generation to generation,”
- Arabs won’t pitch their tents there; shepherds won’t rest there.
- Building materials never reused.

### 3. Historical reality: fall vs. destruction

- 539 BC: Babylon **fell** to the Persians without a battle (Cyrus’ engineers diverted the river; troops entered under the gates).
- City continued as a major center:
  - Persian secondary capital for ~200 years.
  - Later became Alexander the Great’s capital; he died there.
  - Still populated into early centuries AD and even used for field labor during 19th-century excavations.
- Therefore: the **final, Sodom-like destruction** described in Isaiah/Jeremiah has **not yet happened**.

### 4. Modern rebuilding and future expectation

- Saddam Hussein invested heavily in rebuilding Babylon on its ancient foundations (bricks stamped with his name).
  - Archaeologically verified structures: palaces, processional way, museum, etc.
  - Anticipation: literal Babylon will re-emerge as a **major world power center** before its final destruction.
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## VI. Mystery Babylon – The Religious System (Revelation 17)

### 1. The “great whore” riding the beast

- Woman (religious system) is distinct from the beast (political power).
- She rides the beast for a time, then is eventually destroyed by the very political power she used.

### 2. Mother of harlots and abominations

- All forms of pagan idolatry trace back to Babylon:
    - Various goddess cults (Astarte, Diana, etc.) are rebranded versions of Babylonian myths.
  - 3. **Drunk with the blood of the saints**
    - Church history has many dark chapters:
      - Medieval persecutions, Inquisitions, abuses carried out in the name of Christ.
      - Not only in Roman Catholic history; Protestant movements also guilty when they gained temporal power.
    - Revelation's phrase gains weight when you know European church–state history.
  - 4. **Connections to Rome and the Vatican (with caution)**
    - Strong parallels between Mystery Babylon in Rev 17 and aspects of Roman Catholicism and apostate Christendom.
    - Recommended resource: *A Woman Rides the Beast* (Dave Hunt).
    - But: Mystery Babylon is broader than just one denomination.
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## VII. Mystery Babylon & Literal Babylon Brought Together

1. **Revelation 18: The commercial city**
  - Babylon as a great city, judged in “one hour.”
  - Three groups lament her fall:
    - Kings of the earth
    - Merchants of the earth
    - Those who trade by sea
  - Indicates a major **economic/trade center**, not just a religious symbol.
2. **Zechariah 5 – The Woman in the Ephah**
  - Ephah: standard commercial volume measure (like a big jar/oil drum).
  - A woman inside, named “Wickedness,” sealed with a heavy lead lid.
  - Two winged women (stork-like, unclean birds) carry the Ephah.
  - Destination: “to build it a house in the land of Shinar,” where it will be set on its own base.
  - Interpreted as:
    - The end-times **religious–commercial system** (the “whore”) being relocated and established in **Shinar/Babylon**.
3. **Historical migration of Babylonian religion**
  - From Babel → Persia → Greece → Rome.

- Under Constantine and later:
    - Pagan festivals, symbols, and practices absorbed and relabeled with Christian names (e.g., some holiday customs).
  - Apostate religious system, now centered in Rome and beyond, ultimately returns to its original base in Babylon.
4. **Both/And conclusion**
- Mystery Babylon = a global religious & commercial system **and**
  - Babylon the Great = a literal city on the Euphrates.
  - In the end times, that system and that city converge and are judged.
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## VIII. From Babel to Abraham – The Next Stage of Genesis

1. **Shift in focus**
    - From global prehistory to a single man and his family: Abram.
    - God takes a pagan Gentile and makes him the first Jew.
  2. **The Abrahamic covenant**
    - Through Abram, all blessings ultimately reach us.
    - Genesis 12–50 will focus on:
      - Abraham (12–20)
      - Isaac (21–26)
      - Jacob (27–36)
      - Joseph (37–50)
  3. **Christ in Genesis**
    - The most exciting feature: seeing Jesus Christ “on every page” in the patriarchal narratives.
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## IX. “So What?” – Personal Application

1. **Beyond information**
  - It’s not enough to say, “That was interesting prophecy and history.”
  - Ask: *What difference does this make in my life?*
2. **Trust in Scripture**
  - Prophecy and historical detail increase our confidence that God’s Word is precise and trustworthy.
3. **Relationship with Christ**
  - Understanding Genesis and Babylon should
    - Drive us to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

- Remind us of our condition in sin and our need for a Savior.

#### 4. **Ongoing assignment**

- As you study:

- Keep asking the “so what?” question.
  - Let the text push you toward obedience, repentance, and deeper fellowship with the living Lord.
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If you'd like, I can now turn this outline into:

- A teaching handout
- A slide-by-slide sermon/lesson outline
- Or a shorter “fill-in-the-blank” version for a study group.