

SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD

Genesis 11:1-9

How do we respond when God says, “I HAVE A PLAN”?

Sometimes He shows us His plan in His Word

Sometimes He speaks through those He has placed in authority over us:

Spouse Parents Employer or church leaders

Sometimes He speaks to us personally—through a “still small voice”

How do we respond when God tells us: “I HAVE A PLAN?”

Do we respond, . . .

“Wait a minute! This is the U.S.A.—a democracy—we have to vote on it!

“I HAVE A BETTER IDEA!”

5 CENTRAL EVENTS OF GENESIS: The Book of Beginnings

All 5 events focus on a beginning in God’s plan.

1. Creation Beginning of the universe 1:1-2:3
 Beginning of man 2:4-25
2. Fall Beginning of sin 3:1-6:8
3. Flood New beginning with Noah 6:9-9:29

Judgment on all creation—all people unite in rebellion against the Creator.

4. Confusion Beginning of the nations 10-11

Following the report of Noah’s death, Noah’s sons become basis for understanding the origins of the nations 10:1 *“This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah’s sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.”*

Lists individuals, peoples and nations which descended from each of them.

Special attention to those peoples which directly affect Israel’s history:

Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt and Canaan.

Nations which conflict with God’s people are traced to humanistic ancestor:

Nimrod, founder of Babel—reputation for great accomplishments.

10:8-12 *“Cush [a son of Ham] was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, ‘Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.’ 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, ...”*

Nimrod establishes a reputation for physical prowess and political power

Name, related to “rebel,” identifies him with tyrannical power.

The story continues to talk about other sons of Ham:

Mizraim => from whom Egypt develops

Canaan => source of pagan occupants of Palestine

While note is taken in Gen. 10, of the eventual distribution of Noah’s sons, no explanation is given for that distribution.

Event which causes them to scatter doesn't occur until => 11:1-9.

5. Call of Abraham Beginning of God's people

These 5 events—the foundation of history—

—are focus of greatest attack/denial of all historical events.

Only story of Jesus Christ is focus of more intense attack and denial!

Satan has a vested interest in denying this story.

If people believe this story, we're forced to acknowledge God's right to rule.

Since people don't want to acknowledge God's right to rule

and submit to Him, they aim all their guns at what God says in Gen. 1-12

They deny the creation of the universe, and of man as a unique creation.

They deny the reality of sin and its effects.

They deny the flood and its effects.

They deny God's role in distinguishing races, peoples and cultures.

They deny God's calling out of Israel as His unique people.

And, of course, they deny what God says about His Son, Jesus Christ.

If we'd just remove these parts of the story—and the climax of the story—

people would have no problem with what the Bible teaches!

Get rid of these 7 issues, and the Bible would be GREAT literature!

But you can't just throw out these issues!

They contain essence of Who God is and what He desires His world to be.

They contain essence of God's plan

...who WE are, ...why we're here, ...where this world is headed.

Appropriate response: believe what He says, submit to Him, trust Him.

THE CAUSE OF THE DISPERSION 11:1-9

Summary of previous human condition:

11:1 *"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech."*

One language; One culture; One people

God issues a command: Multiply and fill the earth

9:1 *"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them,*

'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'"

When they come off ark, God instructs them to multiply and "fill the earth."

Implication: they're to spread out.

Question arises: will people recognize God's authority and obey Him?

God's plan: to bless His creatures as we submit to His authority.

But **man has a better idea!**

MAN'S PLAN TO AVOID GOD'S PLAN 11:1-4

After flood, man moved slowly into fertile crescent:

=> from Ararat around the mountains, down into Shinar.

Finding pleasant pastures in Shinar, they settle there. **11:2**

“As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.”

They decide to build a major project to unite them **11:3-4** *“They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.⁴ Then they said, ‘Come, let’s build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’”*

Man plans to build a great city and a great tower

They don’t do this because they need more housing or office space.

Wouldn’t be adequate flood protection—God promised not to send another!

No indication they built tower for defense—who would attack them?

They want a tower that “*extends to the heavens*”—**they want to be “gods.”**

Cities attributed to Nimrod—during great epochs of Babylonian history

–all had towers (90 meters by 90 meters at base, and 90 meters high).

–they *might* be scaled-down version of the GREAT tower

Logical to assume the original would have been *MUCH GREATER!*

Ancient *pagan* literature seems to affirm the connection.

Man plans to make a great name for himself

Rather than identify with God’s name (as Seth did),

they imitate old pattern: ***trying to make a name for themselves.***

Centrality of pride—**personal pride gets in way of submission to God!**

Man plans to avoid submitting to God’s plan.

They plan to keep people together—to keep from scattering.

Pride leads them to think “*WE have a better idea!*”

They’re more concerned about making a name for selves, than pleasing God.

Passage demonstrates: everything man plans in 1st ½ of story (3-4)

is undone by God in 2nd ½ (5-9).

[Narrative hinges on **11:5** ***“But the Lord came down”***]

GOD COMES DOWN TO SEE 11:5 *“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.”*

God, who is present everywhere, didn’t have to “come down” to take a look.

He’s always aware of our actions.

His response is described from human point of view.

God takes a look at what people are doing. He sees what they’re up to!

GOD INTERVENES TO PREVENT MAN’S PLAN 11:6-9 *“The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this,*

then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.⁸ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.⁹ That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.”

This is flagrant rebellion—they don't want to fill earth. *They want to unite!*

MAN HAS A BETTER IDEA!

Throughout Scripture, God's opposition to man's pride is evident!

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

That theme is evident at Babel.

Man is motivated by pride; he has a better idea!

God is not impressed; He resists man's pride.

**God observes: when people pull together,
they can do whatever they set their minds to!**

If we pull together, we can do whatever we set our mind to!

We won't need God!

Desire to enhance their unity and strength has potential for incredible evil.

Disobedience would lead to further degeneration and rebellion.

So God again intervenes in history.

Reversal: What people consider greatest strength—**UNITY**

—God destroys by confusing language.

What people hold as greatest fear—**SCATTERING**—God brings on them.

What people desired most—**to make a name for themselves**

—comes true, but not name they're hoping for.

They become known as “**Babel**”—name identified with “*confusion*”

**God plans to confuse language
so they won't understand each other**

Different languages and cultures—cause misunderstanding.

Have you heard people talking language you don't understand,
and suspected they're talking about you?

Then you understand what happened at Babel!

Seed sown for Wycliffe Bible Translators!

“When we struggle to understand another language and culture, we're
struggling to overcome God's judgment! *He does things well!*”

Distribution of nations and languages continues to cause lack
of comprehension between nations throughout history.

Racial, cultural barriers; monument to sin!–to man’s “BETTER IDEA!”

God plans to scatter them around the world

Japheth remains mainly in East Asia and Europe

Ham stays mainly in West Asia and Africa

Shem locates mainly in Western Asia–Middle East–

2 racial groups exist side by side–different languages and customs.

These 2 frequently opposed each other.

Genesis 10-11 traces movement: **Ararat => Fertile Crescent => world.**

Scientism–religion of humanistic thinking–

keeps trying to produce evidence to change the story,

finding primitive peoples from “older” dates in other parts of world.

In spite of efforts, they keep finding clues the biblical record is true.

It wasn’t too long ago that **archaeologists discovered “Eve”**

NOT the Eve of the Bible–they found her in the wrong place–

–discovered common DNA route pointing to a common mother

Surprise! We all descend from one woman!

A few weeks ago we mentioned article from **USA Today:**

Geneticists presented DNA evidence, affirming that European and American men are genetically linked to farmers who migrated from the Fertile Crescent about 10,000 years ago.

On vacation, our daughter showed me a book: archaeologist started to study the **Table of Nations–Gen. 10**, assuming evidence would disprove it–that there’d be no evidence of these people.

Discovers records these peoples existed–just where you’d expect!

Amazing! Clues keep appearing to affirm God’s version of the story!

God plans to stop to man’s plan–to stop the building

God stops united effort to make name for themselves.

It becomes basis for spreading people around the world

History becomes–not story of the race, but story of nations, with hostilities.

“Babel” becomes identified with “confusion.”

Abandoned building stands as reminder of man’s attempt to make a name for himself, and God’s intervention => **Atitlán project.**

Spiritual lessons learned out of the confusion:

1. Man’s heart is incurably rebellious; determined to exalt his own name, rather than God’s.

Every test of obedience demonstrates effect of sin on our family.

God told man His plan–MAN HAD A BETTER IDEA!

They unite everyone to avoid doing what God told them to do!

2. God hates human pride. This is central to whole account!

Pride and trust are mutually exclusive.

Putting our plans ahead of God's plans—assuming **we “have a better idea”**—is evidence of pride—God hates it and opposes it.

3. International hostilities and misunderstandings stem from man's rejection of God's will. NOT God's original plan!

4. The confusion which starts with God's intervention at Babel is resolved by God's intervention in His kingdom.

Zeph. 3:9 *“Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve Him shoulder to shoulder.”*

Everyone will speak one pure language

All gather together from nations into which they've been scattered.

Focus on God's people, Israel—benefits extend to all peoples;

Gen. 11 is reversed!

All worship together in God's holy mountain.

5. It doesn't pay to avoid God's plan—trade God's plan for ours

We start out thinking we'll do what God wants.

Then we set our minds on our own goals—“We have a better idea!”

Danger of building an empire to glorify self,

rather than submit to God's authority and live to please Him.

“Success Syndrome” => evaluate ministries by ABCs of success:

attendance, buildings, and cash—numbers and money

—instead of by—pleasing GOD!

Babel's standard: unity, making a name for ourselves

When God speaks we better listen! Rebellion produces confusion.

When we try to communicate with someone from another culture,

remember result of attempt to switch our plan for God's plan.

That's the source of the confusion!

Which do we prefer—blessing or confusion?

It never pays to try to avoid God's revealed plan for our life!.

Whenever we come up with “a better idea” instead of God's plan, the result is always confusion!

—It never looks like we want it to look—God puts a stop to our plan.

God's plan is to make a name for HIMSELF!

God never shares His glory with anyone.

When we set out to make a name for ourselves, it ends up CONFUSION.