

The Origin of Languages

Introduction & Review

- ❑ God established a covenant with inhabitants of the earth to never destroy the earth again by flood – rainbow as sign (Gen. 9:8-17).
- ❑ Noah committed the sin of drunkenness & nakedness in his new life after the flood (Gen. 9:18-21).
- ❑ Noah’s youngest son Ham dishonored & disrespected his father – “saw” & “told” (v. 22). Shem & Japheth honored & respected their father – “covered” & “did not see” (v. 23).
- ❑ The consequences: the descendants of Ham’s youngest son will be servants of Israel (v. 25), the descendants of Shem will be a blessing to humanity – Israel & Christ (v. 26), and the descendants of Japheth will prosper & grow with Shem (v. 27).

I. Unity in Language (Gen. 11:1-4)

A. United on a place (Gen. 11:1-2)

Chapter 10 describes life in the new world as related & scattered nations (10:5, 32). Chapter 11 details how the nations were scattered (as Gen. 2 details chapter 1). The immediate descendants of Noah’s sons spoke the same language & settled in one geographic location (11:1-2). God had told them to scatter, multiply & fill the earth but they disobeyed & settled down in Shinar.

B. United in a purpose (Gen. 11:3-4)

They made their own building materials rather than use stones provided by God (v. 3). They share a spirit of unity: in disobeying God – “lest we be dispersed...” (v. 4c), independence from God – “build ourselves a city” (v. 4a) & blatant pride – “make a name for ourselves (v. 4b).

APPL: Unity does not always result in good. Adam & Eve were also united on a place & purpose to gain independence in disobeying God. They also agreed to use temporary materials to build some security – fig leaves. This human effort by Noah’s descendants & the materials used are both just as flawed as Adam & Eve’s original plan. There is nothing new under the sun with sin or sinners. We repeat the same sins with the same consequences (Gen. 6:5; 8:21c)! But thru Christ we can change & be unified in Him & His plans.

II. Division in Languages (Gen. 11:5-9)

A. God’s intervention (Gen. 11:5-7)

The omniscient God will never allow sin to stop His plans & purposes. God is fully aware & knowledgeable of all human activity (v. 5). God is fully aware that pride even in unity will always leads to destruction (v. 6). They will continue in this evil plan unless God intervenes. God is fully aware of the necessary actions to destroy a sinful plan before it destroys His plans (v. 7). God’s tolerates evil for a limited period of time until His plans are jeopardized & His purposes are at risk.

B. God’s correction (Gen. 11:8-9)

God miraculously & instantaneously took away the ability for one group of people to communicate with another. This action from God caused people to stop the construction, disperse to various geographic locations & speak unique languages (v. 8; 10:5). Families or clans that spoke the same language would migrate & stay together. The name of the city would serve as a reminder of the consequences of attempted independence & gross pride (v. 9). Babel was the city of pride that resulted in destruction (Pr. 16:18).

APPL: Believers sometimes start things or get involved with something outside God’s will; assume that a group of believers in unity can’t be wrong. But remember God will intervene in anything outside His will that threatens His plans & purposes (Is. 46:9b-10). In the NT God had to intervene when the newly formed church in Jerusalem wanted to settle in a place of supposed security – but God scattered them (Ac. 8:1ff; 1:8). God’s plan succeeded in Noah’s generation just as it did with the early church in spite people missing God’s will – His plans & purposes will be accomplished. And God’s plan will be fully revealed when He brings all the redeemed together in glory speaking that heavenly language (Rev. 7:9-10)!