

***BEGINNINGS: Lesson Ten,***  
***The Beginning of the Dispersion of Nations***  
***Genesis 9:18-11:9***

**Subject:** Noah's sons reveal their character, father nations, and following God's intervention, disperse.

**Main Idea:** Left on our own, mankind is hopelessly sinful.

**Principles:**

1. *Participating in God's blessings does not assure one's salvation.*
2. *Pride leads to disgrace.*

### Introduction

A few years ago, following a trip to Africa, our daughter was finishing a round of malaria medicine when one of the capsules lodged in her esophagus. Overnight, it created an open wound in her throat. A visit to the hospital and some uncomfortable tests resulted in prescriptions for two additional bottles of pills. It seemed ironic that pills caused the problem and pills were also the remedy.

Today, many issues can be treated with medication of some kind, but there are some things no pill can fix. We have only had to study the first ten-and-a-half chapters of the Bible to see that since the Fall, there is something desperately wrong with mankind. Overall, Genesis 3-11 is a portrait of mankind's sin-sickness, his rebellion in the face of God's goodness. We would have hoped to discover that the world was a far better place after the Flood wiped it clean. Instead, we must sadly conclude that while God had been just in removing Noah's depraved generation from the earth, the Flood ultimately did nothing to cure mankind's diseased heart (Genesis 8:21).

After the Flood, Noah's three sons were entrusted with the job of repopulating the earth. Our lesson begins with a story that gives insight into each son's character. We also learn what happened to some of their descendants socially, geographically, and spiritually, within the framework of repopulation and man's ongoing rebellion. The lesson ends with a second story showing how the sins of the fathers (in this case, Ham and Canaan) were handed down and how God dealt with this sin in order to protect His ultimate promise-plan of salvation. Overall, these last chapters of primeval history emphasize that left on our own, mankind is hopelessly sinful.

## I. Noah's Sons' Characters – Genesis 9:18-23

### A. Noah's Sons Reintroduced – 9:18-19

- i. Canaan Included: By way of introducing the story and the genealogies that follow, Genesis 9:18-19 tells us that after the Flood, Noah's sons repopulated the earth. One grandson is included in the introductory statement: Canaan. This is not surprising since the story concludes with Canaan's cursing.
- ii. Birth Order: The sons of Noah are Shem, Ham and Japheth. It is possible that the frequently repeated list, "Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (6:10, 7:13, 9:18, and 10:1) reflects birth order.
  1. Some translations of Genesis 10:21 confirm that Shem was indeed the older brother of Japheth. Other translations indicate that Japheth was Shem's older brother.
  2. Additionally, most translations of 9:24 indicate that Ham was the "youngest" of Noah's sons, but some scholars believe the term is comparative (younger) rather than superlative (youngest).<sup>i</sup> Thus, Ham may have only been *one of* the two younger sons.
  3. If Japheth was, in fact, the eldest brother, a likely explanation for Shem preceding him on the list is that Moses desired to honor Shem as the forefather of Israel. The genealogical table in chapter 10 gives Shem's lineage last, but this is easily explained. Genesis is consistent in briefly listing the genealogy of the brother who is *not* part of the important Messianic line first, and thus concluding the author's interest in his life's story. Then the longer and more important account of the brother from whom Jesus descends is given. This same pattern appears in Genesis 4:17-5:32 with Cain and Seth, in Genesis 25:12-26 with Ishmael and Isaac, and in Genesis 36:1- 37:2 with Esau and Jacob. The probable reasons why Japheth's line precedes Ham's in Genesis 10 are given later in this lesson.

**B. Noah's Drunkenness – 9:20-21**: Noah had agricultural talent. He was "a man of the soil" (9:20). Unfortunately, the fruit of his gift led to his disgrace. He became drunk on wine and lay uncovered inside his tent. Most likely, he uncovered himself because he was flushed.

- i. The Sin of Drunkenness: The New Testament forbids drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18). While small amounts of wine appear to have some health benefits, I urge you to exercise great caution and discernment in deciding whether or not this benefit is worth the risk it introduces. Alcoholism results in horrific pain and destruction to families. The dysfunction in Noah's family is a clear example. While drunkenness may not be a temptation for you, it may become so for someone observing you (like one of your children). And none of us can say for sure that a modest amount of alcohol consumption won't, at some later time, develop into an addiction. Some have thought that Noah may not have realized the effect the wine would have. Although that is possible, Noah was not a sinless man, nor does Bible ever hesitate to expose the failures of its heroes.
- ii. Purpose of the Story: In the end, Noah's drunkenness is not the main point of this story. The incident is mentioned because it highlights the characters of Noah's sons, character qualities that were apparently imitated and expanded upon by some of Noah's grandsons, as explained in the extended family history that follows.

### **C. Noah's Sons' Responses – 9:22-23**

- i. Ham's Sin: Verse 22 says that Ham saw his father naked and told his brothers about it. Later (verse 24-25), Noah cursed him for it. What exactly was Ham's sin? And why was his offense so severe that it was worthy of a curse?
  1. Some of the proposed explanations include the possibility that intercourse between Ham and his mother is somehow implied (resulting in the birth of Canaan), that Ham raped his naked father, or even that Ham castrated Noah! But none of these is stated in the account, nor are they necessary to explain the story.
  2. The Bible places great emphasis on honoring one's parents (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2-3). In the Ten Commandments, honoring one's parents is first among those that reference our relationships with other people. By viewing his father's nakedness and making light of his vulnerable position, Ham greatly disrespected his father. In those days, the father's genitals were considered a sign of his strength and a symbol of the family's dignity.<sup>ii</sup>
  3. At the very least, Ham was morally careless. Like the other five flood survivors, he had undoubtedly been impacted by the wicked culture whose people God had destroyed in the Flood. However, Ham's disrespect might have reflected an underlying potential or tendency toward sexual perversion, as was certainly the case with the descendants of Ham's son Canaan.

- ii. Canaan's Involvement: Verse 22 calls Ham “the father of Canaan.” After the incident in which Ham showed disrespect, Noah cursed Ham's son Canaan (verse 25), not Ham.
  1. Attempts to explain this usually suggest that Canaan was somehow involved in the incident, but Canaan's involvement is not explicit in the text. It is not uncommon for a child to share his or her parents' (or grandparents') weaknesses, sometimes to a greater extent. Noah must have seen Ham's personal weakness magnified in Canaan, to such a greater degree that he cursed Canaan for it.
  2. While we don't know the extent of Canaan's personal sin, his descendants were a repulsively immoral people, especially known for sexual obsession and deviation. The Canaanite city of Sodom was famous for homosexuality (the term “sodomy” is derived from it). Archaeologists have uncovered Canaanite symbols and texts that, in the words of Old Testament scholar Walt Kaiser, are “explicit enough to make many a modern pornographic dealer seem a mere beginner in the trade of deviant sexuality.” According to Kaiser, even the depraved Romans were shocked by the practices of the last vestige of Canaanites, the Phoenicians at Carthage.<sup>iii</sup>
  3. Although Ham's behavior foreshadowed the sin of his descendants, Ham was not ultimately responsible for God's curse on Canaan. Canaan and his descendants were cursed because *of their own moral choices*.
- iii. Shem and Japheth's Respect: Two of Noah's sons had a proper sense of guilt and shame. In contrast to their brother's disrespect, Shem and Japheth entered the tent backward to avoid seeing their naked father's body and covered him.

**D. Noah's Prophecy – 9:24-29:** Noah's blessing and curse reflected the nature of his three sons, prophetically predicting that these natures would be perpetuated in their descendants.

- i. Abuse of the Passage: Some have wrongly used this passage to support the superiority of some nations or races. Sadly, some people groups have even twisted it to justify the enslavement of others. But the object of Noah's curse is specifically the Canaanites, who were *not* black. Racial prejudice is sin and certainly cannot be supported by this, or any other, Bible passage.

- ii. Curse on Canaan: Noah said Canaan would be a slave to his brothers. Years later, God promised the land of Canaan to Shem's descendant Abraham (12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21). Centuries after that promise was given, God sent Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, to destroy the Canaanite people because the Canaanites' sin had "reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16; Exodus 3:8, 23:23). A few pockets of Canaanites survived and became slaves of Israel, in direct fulfillment of Noah's prophecy.
- iii. Blessing on Shem: Shem was the ancestor of Abraham and the Israelites. Noah praised "the God of Shem," an indication that Shem followed in his father's righteous footsteps.
- iv. Blessing on Japheth
  - 1. *Extended Territory*: Noah prophesied that Japheth's territory would be extended. Possibly, this blessing was meant to also include the world's goods. Today, the Indo-European people groups (Japheth's descendants) occupy the greatest amount of the earth's land.
  - 2. *Live in Shem's Tents*: Noah also prophesied that Japheth would live in the tents of Shem.
    - a. In the most general sense, this suggests friendly terms between the two. The greater geographical distance between the Japhethites and the Shemites certainly made warring over land disputes less likely. By contrast, Shem's descendants and Ham's descendants (especially the Canaanites) dwelt in much closer proximity to one another.
    - b. If we take the Japhethites to represent all Gentiles, there is also a spiritual fulfillment to this prophecy. The Gentiles have been included in ("lived in the tents of") the spiritual blessings of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22). Furthermore, we learn from the book of Acts that when the Gospel was carried outside Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, it was primarily carried into the European regions, and from there, to the ends of the earth (see especially Acts 16:6-10).
    - c. Finally, some suggest the prophecy that Japheth would live in Shem's tents references the Gentiles' physical possession of the land of Israel. Certainly this has occurred in history (Roman occupation being but one example), but as scholars Keil and Delitzsch state, *...if the dwelling of Japhet (sic) in the tents of Shem presupposes the conquest of the land of Shem by Japhet, it is a blessing not only to Japhet, but to Shem also, since, whilst Japhet enters into the spiritual inheritance of Shem, he brings to Shem all the good of this world (Isa. 60).*"<sup>iv</sup>

**Summary Statement:** Noah's drunkenness, Ham's sin, and Canaan's curse sadly illustrate what God had said immediately after the Flood: the inclination of the human heart still remained evil (8:21).

Genesis 9 portrays Ham as a man without moral character. This may cause us to wonder at Ham's inclusion in the remnant that was saved by the Ark. Even though Ham behaved like those who were destroyed by the Flood, he had been a participant in God's blessing. Only God knows whether Ham repented of his disrespect and entered into a life of faith. Ham may be in heaven today, or perhaps he is not. The warning for us is serious.

**Principle:** *Participating in God's blessings does not assure one's salvation.*

The author of Hebrews repeatedly pleads with us not to take our salvation for granted (Hebrews 4:1; 6:4-6).

- It is possible to align oneself with God's people (profession of faith, church attendance, faithful commitment to studying the Bible), participate in God's blessings (by acknowledging Him as the Giver of all life's good pleasures, by interest in God's word, and even by seeing evidence of God at work around you) and *still not be saved* in the end!
- We cannot gain eternal life by merely *aligning ourselves with* and *acknowledging* what is right and true. We are only truly saved by the kind of personal faith in Jesus Christ that is *transformational* (James 2:17, 26) and *persevering* (Hebrews 10:23 – 12:3).

**Application:** Have you examined your motives for aligning yourself with God's people and participating in this Bible study? You might be experiencing some benefits by it, but if you have not determined to follow Jesus on the narrow road (Matthew 7:13-14) that leads to salvation *at any cost* (Matthew 16:24), you are like Ham: you have no guarantee of final salvation.

**Transition:** Reading of Noah's drunkenness and Ham's sin clearly makes the point that removing sinful people from the world (as God did in the Flood) was not sufficient to remove the sin nature from mankind. Left to ourselves, we are hopelessly sinful.

## II. Noah's Descendants' Scattering – Genesis 10:1-11:9: Genesis 10 and 11 describe how the “nations spread out over the earth after the Flood” (10:32).

### A. Seventy Nations

- Descendants and People Groups: In some verses of this horizontal genealogy, people groups are given, rather than the man for whom they were named. For example, two of Javan's “sons” are listed as the Kittites and the Rodanites. In other cases, the man's actual name is listed (two of Javan's “sons” are listed as Elishah and Tarshish) and his name represents the entire people group that descended from him.

ii. The Pattern of Sevens

1. *The Sevens*: The number seven and its multiples are of special significance in the Bible. Seven indicates completeness. Note that while the “sons” of Japheth, Ham, and Shem are listed, only a few specific grandsons are named, so that the total number of sons and grandsons (or their people groups) equals seventy. An interesting parallel appears in Genesis 46, where we find a list of Jacob’s 70 descendants, who he took to Egypt (see Genesis 46:27). The total “sons”/people groups listed in Genesis 10 not only totals seventy, many of the sub-lists total seven. The list of Japheth’s seven sons is followed by a list of seven of his grandsons. The names of seven of Ham’s grandsons appear immediately after the names of his four sons. After an insertion about Nimrod, Ham’s line continues with the naming of the seven sons of Egypt (“Mizraim” in some translations). While the list in Genesis 10 is not exhaustive, it is nevertheless complete, in the sense that it is exactly as God intended it to be.<sup>v</sup>
  2. *Two Special Groups*: Although the Canaanites and Semites are part of the total of seventy, unlike the other sons, no part of their sub-lists totals seven. This is probably because they are the two people groups of major interest to the remainder of the Old Testament, and thus, more information is given about them.
- iii. Purpose of the List: The author’s interest wasn’t simply to include or omit names to ensure a total of seventy. His purpose was *to describe the relationships of the nations to Israel*. A theological implication with respect to the nations’ relationships to Israel is clearly implicit. For this reason, we should see the Table of Nations (as Genesis 10 is often called) as socio- and geo-political, more than merely familial. In other words, *not all* of the relationships described may be genealogical. Some of those named may have chosen to ally with different tribes than the ones into which they were born and the Table may reflect these alliances.<sup>vi</sup>

**B. The Japhethites – 10:2-4**

- i. First in the List: Japheth may have been the oldest son, as previously explained. Although this could be the reason his descendants are named first, it would be more in keeping with the pattern of Genesis to conclude that Japheth’s line is first because the author is less interested in it. The hostility between the people of *Ham* and the people of *Shem* constitute the story of the remainder of the Old Testament.

- ii. Geography: As previously mentioned, Japheth is the ancestor of the world's Aryan (Indo-European) people groups. The Japhethites listed are primarily associated with northern and western sites (Asia Minor and Europe).
- iii. Japhethite Tribes
  1. *Gomer*: Gomer was the ancestor of the Cimmerians, “from whom are descended the *Cumri* or *Cymry* in Wales and Brittany”<sup>vii</sup>
  2. *Gomer's “Sons”*: Ashkenaz is the father of the people the Greeks called the Scythians, “an Indo-European nomadic people, expert in cavalry and archery... Since the Middle Ages, ‘Ashkenaz’ has been a Jewish designation for Germany.”<sup>viii</sup> Gomer's other two sons also represent northern tribes.
  3. *Magog*: Magog was a nation somewhere in the far north (some have suggested Russia or a nation in Asia<sup>ix</sup>). The name appears in two of the Bible's prophetic passages (Ezekiel 38:2 and Revelation 20:8), where it is linked with the final, world rebellion against God.
  4. *Madai* are the Medes.
  5. *Javan* are the Hellenists (the Greeks).
  6. *Javan's “Sons”*: Two of Javan's “sons,” Elishah and the Kittites, are associated with Cyprus. Tarshish (another “son”) is a name familiar to Bible students as the location toward which Jonah fled to escape God's call. Its precise location is unknown. Presumably it was a coastal city along the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>x</sup> The Rodanites (Dodanim) could be the Island of Rhodes.<sup>xi</sup>
  7. *Tubal and Meshek* are both identified with Turkey.
  8. *Tiras*: Tiras' history is presently less certain. Some have identified these people with the “Tyrsenoi, the Greek name for the Etruscans, a people who migrated from Asia Minor to Italy.”<sup>xii</sup>

**C. The Hamites** – 10:6-20: The Hamites are primarily associated with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Arabia.<sup>xiii</sup> As the primary Old Testament enemies of the Jews, much more detail is given about Ham's descendants than those of Japheth.

- i. Cush: The first son of Ham listed is Cush. The name is associated with the area south of Egypt.
- ii. Cush's “Sons”: Interestingly, the names of some of Cush's descendants are also listed as descendants of Shem, indicating mingling between the tribes. The name Cush can be traced into Africa, but Cush's descendants were not all African settlers. Most of them were Arabian, and at least one, Nimrod, built cities in Mesopotamia.<sup>xiv</sup>
  1. *Nimrod the “Gibborim”*: Nimrod's name is still attached to cities and mounds in Babylonia today and appears in Sumerian and other ancient literature, testifying to his truly dynamic character.<sup>xv</sup>

Genesis 10:8 calls Nimrod a “Gibbôrôm,” which means “a mighty man of valor, strength, wealth or power.” Moses used the same term to describe the depraved, pre-flood Nephilim in Genesis 6 (6:4).<sup>xvi, xvii</sup> Although the chief idea is that like the Nephilim, Nimrod was a powerful man, his association with them is certainly not flattering. Nimrod’s name means “to rebel” or “to revolt.”<sup>xviii</sup> From inference in the Bible and from history, it can only be concluded that he was a man who lived in “violent resistance to God.”<sup>xix</sup>

2. *“A Mighty Hunter Before the Lord:* From him, a saying became popular: “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord” (10:9). Hunting was a common pursuit of early Egyptian and Mesopotamian kings.<sup>xx</sup> Hebrew scholars understand the phrase “before the Lord” in two ways. One is that the Lord’s name simply indicates a superlative degree. In other words, “Nimrod was the greatest hunter in the world.”<sup>xxi</sup> The second is that the Lord *observed* Nimrod’s hunting. In light of Nimrod’s connection with Babylon (and by implication, the Tower of Babel incident in chapter 11), one would have to conclude that God must have been displeased with what He saw and that “before the Lord” actually implies “against the Lord.”<sup>xxii</sup> The Bible occasionally uses the Hebrew word “hunt” in reference to hunting men (Jeremiah 16:16).<sup>xxiii</sup> In other words, an aggressive, tyrannical, empire builder.
3. *Other Associations:* Attempts to further identify Nimrod as a historical character have not yet been successful. Suggestions have included the mythological hero, Gilgamesh; Marduk, the god of Babylon; and the great emperor Sargon of Akkad, among others.<sup>xxiv</sup> Some, connecting Nimrod with Babylon and its premiere deity Marduk (also known as Merodoch, Jeremiah 50:2, and Bel, Isaiah 46:1), consider Nimrod the founder of idolatry.<sup>xxv</sup>
4. *Nimrod’s Kingdoms:* Nimrod founded Mesopotamian “kingdoms” in Babylonia (Shinar) and Assyria (10:10-11). According to chapter 11, Babylonia is where the Tower of Babel was constructed. Both Babylon and Assyria play significant roles in Old Testament history. In the 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., the Assyrian and Babylonian empires dominated the Middle East. More importantly, they were major enemies of Israel.
  - a. *Babylon:* The oldest Sumerian name for Babylon meant “the gate of god.” The name “was translated into Akkadian as *bab-il*. According to *Enuma Elish*, the Mesopotamian creation epic, the gods themselves built the temple there for the god Marduk at the beginning of time.”<sup>xxvi</sup>



iii. Arphaxad

1. *Region*: A Hebrew tradition connects the consonants at the end of “Arphaxad” with Chesed, the ancestor of the Chaldeans.<sup>xxxii</sup> Others have suggested the name Arphaxad can be traced to a region in Iran.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Since the name is unknown outside the Bible, nothing can be determined conclusively about the geographical region where Arphaxad’s immediate descendants settled.
2. *Arphaxad’s Son Eber*: Arphaxad has two Biblical distinctions and both are related to his grandson Eber. “Eber” is the eponym of “Hebrew,” although among Eber’s descendants, only those within the lineage of Israel used this name. Furthermore, Eber carried the privileged line from which the promised Messiah would descend. Genesis 11 and Luke 3 record this genealogy. Eber had two sons:
  - a. *Joktan*: Once again following the pattern of Genesis, as the brother from whom the Messiah did not ascend, Joktan and his descendants are named and dismissed.
  - b. *Peleg*: The phrase “in [Peleg’s] time the earth was divided” is given to explain Peleg’s name. Traditionally, the phrase is understood to indicate that it was during Peleg’s lifetime that the Lord confused men’s languages (as described in chapter 11). A few alternate suggestions include division of land by earthquake and the division in half of life spans in Peleg’s time (as indicated by the genealogy of Genesis 11).<sup>xxxiii</sup> Peleg was an ancestor of Abraham and thus, of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the description of Peleg’s descendants is delayed until chapter 11, where it receives much greater attention.
3. *Lud*: Lud, the fourth named son of Shem is possibly either the Ludbu of Assyria or Lydia in Turkey.<sup>xxxiv</sup>
4. *Aram*: The fifth and final listed descendant of Shem. He was the ancestor of the Arameans (better known as Syrians). Four of his descendants are named.

**E. The Tower of Babel** – Genesis 11:1-9: Genesis 11 begins with the statement, “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.” This is curious since we were told three times in the previous chapter that each of the people groups had its *own* language (10:5, 20, 31). The logical conclusion is that the Tower of Babel incident described in chapter 11 explains the *reason* for the scattering detailed in chapter 10. In the process, it gives us much insight into the spiritual climate of the day.

i. Mankind's Sin – 11:1-4

1. *Failure to Scatter*

- a. We are told that moving eastward, people *settled* in Shinar (Babylonia) and built a city with a tower so that they would *not* be “scattered over the face of the whole earth.” Following the Flood, the Lord expressly commanded Noah’s sons to “fill the earth” (9:1, 7). In order to spread over the earth, close social and familial ties would have had to be broken. These are important sources of security, especially to those who have not found their security in the Heavenly Father. There is much joy and comfort in living near one’s family, but sweeter still is the blessing that comes on those who have willingly left their families behind in order to follow the call of God (Matthew 10:37). This account shows the people’s rebellion and disregard for the God of their forefather Noah (11:2, 4, 8-9). Their refusal to spread out is reminiscent of Cain’s refusal to wander (4:12, 17).
- b. Unity allows for greatness, both for good and for evil. The Lord’s statement highlights this fact: “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” (11:6). The Babylonians found unity in their apostasy (recall that Nimrod founded Babylonia). In the book of Revelation, Babylon symbolizes God’s enemies, those whom He will ultimately overthrow.

2. *Insistence on Making a Name for Themselves*: The Babylonians’ first sin was disobedience to the Lord’s command to fill the earth. The second was attempting to make a name for themselves. This is often the goal of those who have no assurance of life beyond the grave. The Babylonians sought to memorialize themselves by building a great tower. Pride was the root of their sin.

ii. Babylonian Ziggurats and Religion

1. Verse 4 indicates that the Babylonians intended to build a city with a tower that would “reach the heavens.” The Tower of Babel was almost certainly a ziggurat: a multi-staged temple tower characteristic of ancient Mesopotamian cities. These temple towers symbolized a meeting point between heaven and earth, with the top of the tower being the place where the gods supposedly resided. They were a human attempt to reach the gods.<sup>xxxv</sup> As previously noted, ancient literature calls the city “Bab-il,” meaning “the gate of god.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> Historians believe that the first ziggurat was erected in Babylon.

2. Ancient Babylonian literature is filled with polytheism. Mankind has long preferred to define his own god(s). According to the Babylonian creation account (*Enuma Elish*), the gods constructed Babylon in honor of Marduk, their chief deity. The account describes the same brick-making process as Genesis 11:3, except that the Babylonian documents indicate each brick was inscribed with Marduk's name.<sup>xxxvii</sup>
  3. The building of these ziggurats required a great amount of organization, and the result was communal pride. By building the tower, the Babylonians arrogantly believed they could reach the gods. According to the Biblical account (11:5), the tower was so far from God that He had to "come down" (an anthropomorphism) in order to see it!
- iii. God's Response – 11:5-9: Previously, God responded to the decay of society with judgment by flood. On this occasion, He responded with another judgment: the confusion of languages. The judgment effectively ended the building program and the people scattered. While the Babylonians apparently thought their city was the "gate of god" ("Bab-il") the Bible calls it "Babel," a Hebrew word that sounds like the word for "confused" (for this reason, in the English language today, "babble" means "gibberish").

**Summary Statement:** The first eleven chapters of Genesis repeatedly show that, left to ourselves, we are hopelessly sinful. What began as a project of Babylonian civil pride ended as a monument of disgrace.

**Principle:** *Pride leads to disgrace* (Proverbs 11:2).

**Application:** It has been said that every human being is a little empire builder. What are you building or investing in? Your retirement or bank account? Your career or resume? Your reputation or position? Your family (you know, the model Christian family you want others to see)? "Your" ministry (the one that you intend to build as a monument to *yourself*)? Is pride at the root of your building projects?

Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its laborers build in vain." Will you boldly invite the Lord of Heaven to come down and put an end to *your* building efforts and become the Builder of all of your buildings?

## Conclusion

Since the Fall, the history of mankind has been one of arrogance and rebellion. Genesis 1-11 prove a point: left to ourselves, we are hopelessly sinful. Left to ourselves, we fall from grace (Genesis 3). Left to ourselves, we believe we are more powerful than we really are (Genesis 4:23-24). Left to ourselves, we do whatever pleases us (Genesis 6:2). Left to ourselves, our strengths and gifts lead us into temptation (Genesis 9:20-21). Left to ourselves, we seek our own security and we built our own empires (Genesis 11:1-9).

The conclusion of Genesis 1-11, the most ancient portion of Biblical history, leaves us in great anticipation of the promised Deliverer. God has recorded our rebellious and prideful history in His word to show us how desperately we need Him.

After this lesson, we have a brief introduction to the life of Abraham before wrapping up the *Beginnings* series.

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<sup>i</sup> Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Vol. 1: Commentary on the Old Testament* (98). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

<sup>ii</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (41). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (117–118). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

<sup>iv</sup> Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Vol. 1: Commentary on the Old Testament* (101). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

<sup>v</sup> Sailhamer, John. (1994). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition: Old Testament* (19). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>vi</sup> Carson, D. A., France, R.T., Motyer, J.A., & Wenham, G.J., Ed. (1994). *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. (Ge 10:1-32). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>vii</sup> Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Vol. 1: Commentary on the Old Testament* (103). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

<sup>viii</sup> Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary* (70). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>ix</sup> Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary* (70). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>x</sup> Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary* (71). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>xi</sup> Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary* (71). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>xii</sup> Sarna, N. M. (1989). *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary* (70). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

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