

# Explore the Bible: January 28

*Stalled • Genesis 11:1-9*

*By Laura Lee Leathers*



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Try to imagine that day in biblical history. In the morning, all the people converse in the same language. By the end of the day, it is believed there could have been as many as 70 different languages “by their clans, in their nations” (Gen. 10:5). For additional information and charts, read the book, *Tower of Babel*, by Bodie Hodge.

**United (Gen. 11:1-4)** –It is estimated that the Babel event occurred about 100 years after the flood, 2348 B.C. (Ussher’s chronology). Based upon the information of Genesis 10 and the potential of large families, there could have been as many as

1000 people at this point.

The families moved from the mountains of Ararat (now modern Turkey) and made their way east to Shinar. Today, The Land of Shinar is Iraq, the northern part of Kuwait, and the western part of Iran. Moving east often indicates a move away from the will of God (Gen. 3:24; 4:16; 13:11).

The people settled in this region and decided they would build themselves a city and a tower. In today's terminology, they built a family dynasty – family wealth, values, and growing businesses.

They did not obey God's command to be fruitful, multiply, and scatter. They chose to depend upon their unity and strength rather than trust God and move boldly into other regions. Their motto: "consolidate, not separate."

Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12), whose name means "we shall rebel," Cush's youngest son, may have been the leader of the people. He was known as being "a mighty hunter before the LORD." Scripture also states he built a kingdom of "Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." He also built Nineveh. Because he was mighty and a leader, he might have been the one overseeing this endeavor.

"Let's make over-fired bricks, let's build ourselves a city and a tower, and let's make a name for ourselves" (vs. 3-4). The bricks were like stone, and the mortar held them together. It's an astounding feat! The tower was likely a tall ziggurat, a pyramid-like structure, with an altar or a temple at the top used to worship various gods. One still exists from the Sumerian period in Ur in Iraq.

The people wanted a city, a tower, and a name. These three things highlight the sin of pride and rebellion against God's word. We, too, must all guard against selfish motives.

**Reviewed (Gen. 11:5-7)** – While man is making plans and

building, Yahweh, omniscient God, is watching. "Came down" shows He is personally involved in the judgment of the people. He is distant.

In verse 6, we don't know if God is conversing within the Godhead or His angelic court (Job 2; Psalm 82). From the Lord's statement, He knew the intentions of men's hearts. Together, humanity could achieve anything. Look at our world today and think about all that has been achieved in science, physics, industry, and medicine. Has it been by man's achievements or God's empowerment?

The Lord says, "Come, let's go down and confuse their language" (v 7). We must realize that when God confused their languages, it was an act of mercy on His part. He could have destroyed them. He wanted the people's obedience to His plans.

**Dispersed (Gen. 11:8-9)** – Construction stopped! No longer could people understand the construction instructions.

God not only confused the people's language, He scattered them throughout the earth. The name went from Babel (confuse) to Babylon ("gateway to a god or gate of the gods") – a wordplay.

The following twelve verses trace the line of Noah's son Shem . . . who fathered Terah, who fathered Abraham. From Adam to Noah to Shem, Ham, and Japheth came all the tribes and nations.

We are of one blood (Acts 17:26-27), made in God's image, and equal in value. As Believers in Christ, we can trust God to help us to fulfill His purposes.

"The literal history of these first 11 chapters of Genesis are foundational to the rest of the Bible, foundational to all doctrine, foundational to our Christian worldview, and foundational to all doctrine."

“History is not the aimless fumbling of men and nations. Interwoven through all this history, we see the hand of the infinite Creator who directs the affairs of men for His purposes – for man’s good and God’s glory” (*Creation to Babel, A Commentary for Families*, by Ken Ham).

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