



"Murmuring is the rising up of oneself against God. It sets oneself against God as if I am wiser than he."

—Thomas Watson

16-Oct-26

Babel: And So It Begins!

About six millennia ago, two systems, two ways of living, briefly competed in the Garden of Eden when the first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, chose to disbelieve [God](#) and go their own way. The [Noachian Flood](#) occurred roughly 1,650 years later. More than a hundred years later, another event confirmed our first parents' choice for the post-Flood world.

Paul states plainly in [Romans 8:7](#), "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the [law of God](#), nor indeed can be." By the time of the Flood, this carnal mind produced a society where "every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" ([Genesis 6:5](#)), and God eradicated all humanity, saving only Noah, his wife, their three sons and daughters-in-law.

Genesis 10 and 11 trace Noah's descendants, the spread of their families, and the beginnings of early civilization. William F. Albright, a twentieth-century biblical archaeologist, states that the Table of Nations, presented in "the tenth chapter of Genesis . . . stands absolutely alone in ancient literature. . . . The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document."

God records a telling incident in [Genesis 11:1-9](#):

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

Therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Babel, from the Hebrew verb *balal* (which denotes "to confuse by mixing"), means "confusion." The Greek word translated as "Babylon" has the same meaning. The King James Version uses "Babel" only twice, in [Genesis 10:10](#) and 11:9. "Babylon" appears in it 257 times, but the underlying Hebrew text uses the same word, *babel*, all 259 times!

Babel is the same place as Babylon. [Genesis 11:2](#) reports that the original city of Babel was built on a plain in Shinar. Similarly, [Daniel 1:2](#) reads, "And the LORD gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into [the king of Babylon's] hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god . . ." While our English Bibles give us the impression that Babel and Babylon are different cities, they are not.

Genesis 11 appears to be an inset chapter that details the building of the first human city after the Flood. Verses 1-9 describe the building of its centerpiece: a tower. The first verse provides an essential detail: All of earth's population shared a common language and speech.

In a 2025 [article](#) on AnswersInGenesis.org, Simon Turpin poses the question, "Did the Whole Earth Settle at Shinar (Babel), or was it only a select portion of the population?" He presents both sides of the argument, convincingly concluding that [Moses](#) literally means the whole earth. When God confused the languages at Babel, it included the world's entire living population.

In [Tower of Babel: The Cultural History of Our Ancestors](#), Bodie Hodge speculates that [Genesis 11:1-9](#) defends against the viewpoint that Genesis 10 and 11 contradict each other. Some point out that [Genesis 10:5](#), 20, and 31 clearly state that God separated people by language, while [Genesis 11:1](#) says the whole earth was of one language. Hodge postulates that Genesis 11 is the chronological account of what happened, filling in some details, while Genesis 10 presents a summary. The Bible uses this literary device frequently. It appears as early as Genesis 2, which expands on details of Creation given in Genesis 1.

Genesis 11 tells us a great deal. Before they started building, the people already had a defiant attitude toward God. He had commanded them to spread abroad and fill the earth, but they gathered together in cities. Rather than give glory to God, they desired to make a name for themselves.

Note the proliferation of the pronoun "they" in the story: *They* journeyed, and *they* found a plain in the land of Shinar, and *they* dwelled there. With the materials available there, *they* made bricks. *They* had asphalt for mortar. *They* said they wanted to make "a name for themselves" to avoid God scattering them over the face of the earth. The wording is a broad hint that *all* the people rejected God's command to spread abroad, choosing instead to build a city and a tower whose top reached to heaven. Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod, may have been their leader, but he only led them in their rebellion.

In [Genesis 10:8-12](#), Moses introduces Nimrod by describing Babel as "the beginning of his kingdom." It was the first piece of the post-Flood system formed in opposition to God's commands. This system continues to the present day and will exist until the [return of Jesus Christ](#).

The original Akkadian name of Babel was Bb-ilim, meaning "gate of god," evidently referring to Marduk. For many centuries, Marduk was the chief god of Babylon and the national god of Babylonia. As such, he was eventually called simply Bel, meaning "lord." The name *Marduk* derives from the Hebrew verb *marad*, meaning "to be rebellious," suggesting that Bb-ilim's people's chosen deity was a god of rebellion. After confusing their languages due to their rebellion, God changed the city's name to reflect its change in condition (as He frequently does), naming it "Babel," confusion.

Nimrod is the only person in the Table of Nations described with heroic terminology. He is called a *gibbor*, a mighty one. Commentators have noted that Moses' singling out of Nimrod reveals him to be, as [one](#) phrased it, "the archetype of political power outside of Yahweh's blessing." His name is composed of the prefix *nun* and the word *marad*, which, as we have seen, means "rebel." The prefix *nun* implies "we will." Thus, his name means "we will rebel." It is interesting that it is "we will rebel" and not "I will rebel."

According to [Josephus](#), Nimrod "excited them to such an affront and contempt of God," but in reality, he only led them where they already wanted to go. Like a politician, Nimrod persuaded the people that their success was not a result of God's blessings, but that "it was their own courage which procured that happiness." He consequently formed a tyrannical government to "bring them into a constant dependence on his power." Further, Josephus writes that Nimrod claimed that, if God should attempt to drown [the world](#) again, "he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers." He then encouraged the people to build a tower too high for the waters to overcome, which is why they sealed it with pitch, like the ark.

We can understand that through his personal determination and example, he appealed to their patriotism (dedication and support for the land or heritage of one's forefathers), even making them feel cowardly if they submitted to

God instead of him. As patriotic often people do, they worked diligently, determinedly, and loyally. They worked together, raising the tower quickly despite its great height, thickness, and strength, making it impregnable. They built it of fired brick cemented with mortar, spreading a thick layer of tar over it to waterproof it.

But even their greatest efforts could not make their tower too strong for God. Yet, rather than leveling the tower and killing all the people, He thwarted their plan by making it impossible for them to continue the project. He peacefully de-escalated the situation by miraculously changing their languages so they could not communicate with one another. As a result, "they ceased building the city" ([Genesis 11:8](#)).

Grouped together by their new languages, seventy nations soon dispersed—unwillingly, to be sure—to the four corners of the earth, as God had originally commanded. He had temporarily interrupted their defiant plans, but their rebellious spirit remained and does so to this day.

Scholars speculate that the ruins of Babel and the tower exist today some 53 miles south of modern-day Baghdad, in Iraq. God has called us, not out of the physical ruins of an ancient city, but out of the system—a way of life—that began at Babel. He calls us to forsake that system and embrace the second of the two systems mentioned in Scripture: God's way, symbolized by another, far more wonderful city, New Jerusalem, "whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[What's So Bad About Babylon? \(1997\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Considering the Tower of Babel and the Babylonian system, mankind must stop trusting in its towers—anything that we place our trust in apart from Almighty God (wealth, status, achievement, military prowess, scientific

inventiveness, etc.), giving us an arrogant, self-centered sense of security and well-being. Babylon constitutes the fountainhead of instruction that, like strong drink, impairs the ability to function properly while creating the illusion of doing better. A mere increase of knowledge (without the accompanying revelation of God) is useless, leading nowhere in terms of solving mankind's real problems. The fruits of Babylon have created a spiritual, social, and ecological crisis which threatens all life. God forces us to make a choice in favor of life and permanence, rejecting the way of death and impermanence.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Communication and Leaving Babylon \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Everything we can know is communicated to us in some form. Usually, we are able to identify the sources of these communications through our senses. Yet, as John Ritenbaugh explains, we are also open to invisible communication from the spirit world—communication designed to conform us to "the course of this world."

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 16-Oct-26) will be **Psalm 55**, given by **Richard T. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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