

Genesis 11:5-9

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God came down to see the work of these people. He saw their unity and decided to confuse their language and to scatter them over the earth. The name of the city was now called Babel.

The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. It is ironic that man builds a tower upward with its top in the sky where God is thought to dwell, and God comes “down” in order to examine their actions. Ultimately, human attempts to achieve glory, which belong to God alone, never succeed.

Verse 6 brings out that *they are one people, and they all have the same language.* The words “one people” likely does not refer to an ethnic identity, but to the unity of purpose of the people. This “one people” is a concern of God.

God notes that *nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.* On the one hand, there is an important positive lesson here: the power of a clear objective. The people had a clear mission, and they united behind the mission. When there is unity of purpose, great accomplishment can be the result. The problem was not that humanity was accomplishing. It is that they were accomplishing the opposite of what God commanded. Mankind was in defiance of God’s will that the entire earth should be populated. If left unchecked, they would undertake more deeds of evil and defiance. The earth had already filled with violence once ([Genesis 6:11](#)) and God had promised He would not destroy the earth as He had done to cleanse the earth from that violence. So, it seems that God intervenes. The intervention of God was a preventive measure as well as a penalty.

The confusion of language occurred in the fourth generation after the flood, about the time of the birth of Peleg ([Genesis 10:25](#)). *God confused their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech and scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.* The people did not want to be “scattered” ([Genesis 11:4](#)), however in the end, that was what happened. The work on the tower and city came to a halt because of the dispersion. This dispersal will eventually result

in the fulfillment of God's command after the flood ([Genesis 9:7](#)). The Babel story shows that the will of God supersedes the designs of men.

The people of Shinar are now in disarray and labeled with a new name "Babel," *because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth*. The Hebrew "Babel" means to confuse, by mixing. They set out to make a name for themselves but succeeded only in the fame of adding confusion to their work and the world. The plan of God to *confuse their language so they will not understand one another's speech* caused mankind to scatter throughout the earth, therefore bringing mankind into compliance with God's command to fill the earth ([Genesis 9:1](#)).

Note in [Genesis 11:7](#) the verse says *Let Us go down there and confuse their language*. God descended to earth in order to prevent the earth from filling with violence, thus fulfilling His promise. This foreshadows a greater advent of God coming to earth, to save the human race from their sins; God become flesh in the person of Jesus. Note the plural, let "us" go down. This is like [Genesis 1:26](#) where God said "Let us make man in our image." There is one God, but with multiple persons from the very beginning of the Bible.

Biblical Text:

⁵ The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶ The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.