

**Intro.** Ronald Reagan, recalling an occasion when he was governor of California and made a speech in Mexico City: “After I had finished speaking, I sat down to rather unenthusiastic applause, and I was a little embarrassed. The speaker who followed me spoke in Spanish—which I didn’t understand—and he was being applauded about every paragraph. To hide my embarrassment, I started clapping before everyone else and longer than anyone else until our ambassador leaned over and said, “I wouldn’t do that if I were you. He’s interpreting your speech.”” (*All the Presidents’ Wits*). Pride can well up like a fountain & cause any of us to come crashing down. That’s what happened in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. As we deal with the next-to-last message in “Building the Foundation of Your Faith,” we look at “Confusion & the Formation of Nations.”

Theme: Sin & prophecy

Background: The opening chapters of Genesis answer key questions for the foundation blocks of life—is there a God? Who am I? Why am I here? What’s wrong with the world? How did things come into being? Today, we consider the origin of the nations.

- Genesis 10-11 is similar to Genesis 1-2 → they both move from general to specific, from the what to the how
- When you think about Babel, you probably know it means “confusion.” The Greek name Babylon is taken from the Hebrew Babel, but to separate it from the idea of “confusion,” Babylon means “the gate of gods,” pointing to the tower reaching into the heavens. Most scholars claim Babel was located about 50 miles south of modern-day Bagdad in Iraq. But Babel/Babylon wasn’t just confusion, for it became the symbol of confusion caused by godlessness.
- Many Christians are familiar with this story—the descendants of Noah all lived in the same area & came together to build a great tower into the heavens to build a name for themselves, but Yahweh looked down from heaven & judged their foolishness by bringing confusion through multiple languages, so that the people couldn’t communicate with each other to continue its construction. Then they began to move away with people they could understand (you wonder how many best friends were no longer able to communicate, so they parted ways)

➤ I want to give you 4 actions to take in light of this passage to help you in “Building the Foundation of Your Faith”

### **1. Repent of pride before it leads to disaster (11:3-9)**

- Notice the language of the people at Babel—“come, let us make...” (11:3), “come, let us build ourselves... let us make a name for ourselves” (11:4)—they were all about themselves

Illus: Did you hear about the clever salesman who closed hundreds of sales with this line: “Let me show you something several of your neighbors said you couldn’t afford” (sermonillustrations.com)

Illus: The last couple of years I have made mention of the spirit of pride in our church & it’s affecting the Lord’s work in & through our church. I don’t mean to say everyone here is prideful, but that there is a significant percentage of people who are. I said 2 years ago that the Church of Laodicea may be most closely addressed to our issues than any of the other 7 churches of Revelation & no one did anything. I mentioned last year that I detected significant pride in our church & several responded by saying, “What are you talking about?” & several others said, “It’s always been here at Sweetwater”—from families who joined in the 70s, in the 80s and in the 90s. Now to be sure, I have had to fight pride more than any other sin in my life & every time I think I’ve slayed the beast, it gets resurrected. Because I have fought pride for so long, it’s easier for me to detect in others. We have people with socio-economic pride in light of their standing in their community or workplace or church. We have people with spiritual pride who say “we built everything you see here with no debt” (rarely giving God credit). We even call ourselves “First” Baptist, so that if any other Baptist churches ever spring up, we were first. We have people whose American pride is greater than their Christian pride—they get more energetic & passionate about a patriotic hymn than any other hymn or song (even applauding patriotic hymns far more loudly than any other). We can be proud to be an American so long as that pride isn’t the first thing to define us, for Jesus said we cannot serve two masters.

Illus: Charles Spurgeon said, “Be not proud of race, face, place, or grace.” Someone else said, “Pride is the only disease that makes everyone sick but the one who has it.”—repent of pride

### **2. Trust in the Lord fully & do not lean on your own understanding (11:3-4; cf. Proverbs 3:5-6)**

- What the people feared would happen—be dispersed over the face of the whole earth if they didn't build a tower to reach to the heavens—was exactly what Yahweh did to them in their efforts to build the tower (11:4, 8-9), because they relied on their own understanding
- Proverbs 3:5-6 is one of the all-time favorite set of verses for Christians, because it's a reminder that we will never be wise enough to live faithfully in life
- The residents at Babel needed this wisdom, because rather than seeking God's face through prayer & worship, they relied on their own abilities to make themselves equal to God

Illus: How many times are we tempted to trust our own understanding? Everyday. We may hear something about a friend or co-worker or neighbor & rely on our own understanding & assume it's true, when in reality, there's more to the story. Or you get a job offer somewhere else & you assume more money will be better for you & you don't stop to think about your connections in a church family. I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone say, "When we moved, we never thought how tough it would be to find a good church like we had before"

### **3. Find unity in the Spirit who draws us together to undo the dispersing at Babel (11:4, 8-9; cf. Acts 2)**

- Various linguistic scholars say there may have been as few as 10 mother languages, from which all languages derive. While they try to connect each language to one of those, they find it impossible to connect to a single language, but that's what the world use to have
- The different languages led to dispersion throughout the whole world, but the Spirit's coming at Pentecost in Acts 2 united people with different languages into the Church as the people of God—they were united around the message of Jesus of Nazareth being crucified & rising from the dead to prove He is Lord & Messiah
- Not only did the different languages lead to the dispersion & division of people groups throughout the world, but it also led to changes in skin color, for those who moved closer to the equator wore less clothing as it was hotter & their pigment darkened while those who moved farther from the equator wore more clothing as it was colder & their pigment lightened (micro-evolution)
- Everyone has melanin, but some have more eumelanin (for darker skin) or pheomelanin (for lighter skin)—slight changes in skin color can pass from generation to generation

Illus: I've asked my friend Ralph Baity to come up here & help me illustrate this. Now, if we were walking down the streets of downtown Orlando on our way to a Magic game, how many of you would assume we're brothers? None of you, right? Several years ago, Ralph walked into his SS class & began introducing himself as Joel Breidenbaugh. Unbeknownst to him, my parents were down visiting that weekend & Nick Elkins said to Ralph, "Here, let me introduce you to your father!" Now, he walks around here & refers to my Dad as "Dad!" Even though we aren't physical brothers, we are distant cousins, because we both came from Noah's family. But far more importantly, we are spiritual brothers—he's my brother of a different mother but the same heavenly Father & I love him because of this connection

### **4. Disperse to the nations to reach them with the gospel to undo the dispersing at Babel (11:8-9; cf. Acts 1:8)**

- The undoing of Babel was not only the Spirit's work at Pentecost in drawing people from different languages back into the fold, but it is also seen in the church's missionary task to reach the nations with the gospel
- We are called to disperse to the nations with the gospel—if we aren't careful, we think only in terms of praying & giving, but few think long & hard about going

Illus: I know a Christian who seeks to make every trip he takes a mission trip, even if it is vacation. He looks for people & wants to have conversations about where they stand in eternity & what Jesus did for them. He misses some opportunities, but the Lord has given him lots of seeds to plant wherever he goes—what about you?

**Conc.** Jose Cubero was one of Spain's most brilliant matadors, at the young age of 21. But one day, he made a tragic mistake during a bullfight. He thrust his sword a final time into a bleeding, delirious bull, which then collapsed. Considering the struggle finished, Jose turned to the crowd to acknowledge the applause. The bull, however, was not dead. It rose and lunged at the unsuspecting matador, its horn piercing his back and puncturing his heart. Cubero died that day—some would say from a pierced heart but others would say from pride. Pride can ruin a person, a family, a business & a church. But the Spirit of God can pierce a heart & soul & bring conviction over sin. But you must repent. Would you repent over pride, trust in the Lord rather than yourself, find unity in the Spirit by coming to Christ & do your part in reaching the nations with the gospel?