

## BABEL AND ITS TOWER (GEN. 11:1–9)

Babel was one of the chief cities in Nimrod's kingdom (Gen. 10:8–10). The term "Babel" is the Hebrew form of the name "Babylon," the city on the Euphrates River in central Mesopotamia.

The city has a very ancient past. It is first mentioned by the Accadian king Sargon (c. 2350 B.C.), who, according to tradition, burned it. Shar-kali-sharri (c. 2200 B.C.) restored its temple tower. Hammurabi (1792–1750 B.C.), a king of the 1st Dynasty of Babylon, made it his capital city. Unfortunately, archaeologists have been able to find evidence only as far back as the period of the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II (605 B.C. and later). The rising water table in the area has prevented much research into earlier periods.

Babel has received much attention over its tower (Gen. 11:4, 5). It likely was a staged temple tower, the distinctive Mesopotamian structure known by the Sumerian term "ziggurat." Ziggurats were developed in the 3rd millennium B.C. at Uruk (Erech) and Ur in Babylonia, as well as at Nineveh, and consisted of smaller and smaller stages or stories built on top of each other.

Those who believe the tower at Babel refers to temple ruins from Mesopotamia point especially to Etemenanki, the ziggurat of the Marduk temple in Babylon. A Babylonian text describes it as having a base of 295 feet square with seven platforms over 108 feet high. The top platform had a temple where the god met with humanity. Access was achieved by ramps or stairways.

In Genesis the tower was never completed (Gen. 11:8). The Etemenanki did not fare much better. It was repaired by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), severely damaged in the Assyrian civil war (652–648 B.C.), restored again by Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 B.C.), but destroyed by the Persian king Xerxes I in 472 B.C. Alexander the Great (323 B.C.) cleared the area to rebuild it, but died prematurely.



<sup>15</sup>Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; <sup>16</sup>the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; <sup>17</sup>the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; <sup>18</sup>the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. <sup>19</sup>And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. <sup>20</sup>These were the sons of Ham, according to their families,

according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations.

<sup>21</sup>And children were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. <sup>22</sup>The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. <sup>23</sup>The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.<sup>a</sup> <sup>24</sup>Arphaxad begot Salah,<sup>a</sup> and Salah begot Eber. <sup>25</sup>To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. <sup>26</sup>Joktan begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>27</sup>Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, <sup>28</sup>Obal,<sup>a</sup> Abimael, Sheba, <sup>29</sup>Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. <sup>30</sup>And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. <sup>31</sup>These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.

<sup>32</sup>These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations;

TIME CAPSULE		2500 to 2400 B.C.
2500	Earliest surviving dam, in Egypt, 272 feet thick	
2500	Stone temples built at Ggantija, Malta	
2500	Egyptians use the sistrum, a metal percussion instrument	
2500	Widespread use of axes with sockets for the handle	
2450	Smelted iron from Mesopotamia	
2450	Egyptians make copper pipes	
2400	Egyptians use oars to propel large boats	
2400–2250	Ebla, a Semitic city-state in northern Syria	

10:23 <sup>a</sup>Called *Meshech* in Septuagint and 1 Chronicles 1:17

10:24 <sup>a</sup>Following Masoretic Text, Vulgate, and Targum;

Septuagint reads *Arphaxad begot Cainan, and Cainan begot*

*Salah* (compare Luke 3:35, 36). 10:28 <sup>a</sup>Spelled *Ebal* in

1 Chronicles 1:22