

# Bite Size Bible Study

Tower of Babel #151

By Pastor Lee

Now the **whole world** had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar (Babylonia) and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be **scattered over the face of the whole earth.**" But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then **nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.** Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:1-9 NIV

Now compare that with Genesis 11:1-9 in the Benner Mechanical Translation.

and **all of the land** existed as one lip (can also mean language) and a unit of words, and it came to pass in their journey from the east, then they found a level valley in the land of Shinar, and they settled there, and they said each to his companion, come, we will make bricks and we will cremate them, and the bricks existed to them for stone, and the slime existed for them for mortar, and they said, come, we will build for us a city and a tower, and his head will be in the skies, and we will make for us a title, otherwise we will **scatter abroad upon the face of all the land**, and YHWH went down to see the city and the tower which the sons of the human built, and YHWH said, though the people are a unit and to all of them is one lip, and this is what they will begin to do, and now **not a thing will be fenced in (in this context means limited or restricted) from them, all which they will plot to do.** Come, we will go down and we will mix their lip there, that each will not hear (possibly meaning understand) the lip of his companion, and YHWH scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the land, and they terminated to build the city. Therefore he called out her title Bavel, given that there YHWH mixed the lip of all the land, and from there YHWH scatter them abroad upon the face of all the land.

This region has a long history. Located in the eastern end of the Fertile Crescent. Shinar is a general synonym

for Babylonia. The location of Shinar is evident from its description as it encompasses both Babel/Babylon (in northern Babylonia) and Erech/Uruk (in southern Babylonia). In the Genesis 10:10, at the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom it is said to have been "Babel [Babylon], Erech [Uruk], Akkad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." Verse 11:2 states that Shinar enclosed the plain that became the site of the Tower of Babel some time after the Great Flood, possibly hundreds of years.

**Babylonia** was an ancient Akkadian speaking state and cultural area based in central southern Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) and parts of Syria. A small Amorite ruled state emerged in 1894 BC, which contained the minor administrative town of Babylon. It was a small provincial town during the Akkadian Empire (2335–2154 BC). It was greatly expanded during the reign of Hammurabi (c. 1810-1750 BC) and became a major capital city. During the reign of Hammurabi and afterwards, Babylonia was called "the country of Akkad" in reference to the previous Akkadian Empire.

With that background we could wonder why these people would want to build a tower to reach the sky (heavens)? Was it just to make a name for themselves or did it mean more to them?

If we remember that during this time they believed that the sky and above was the abode of the god's; living in the dome that enclosed the land and waters. By making a tower that would reach to the god's they would have greater access to those gods and thus more respect as well as control of the people.

This was not a new concept, albeit a more extravagant one. Many of the temples for the god's had what was called a ziggurat or stairway for the god to go up and down to visit the people in his temple and garden. The concept here may have been the first real attempt to reach that height, but the idea of being higher would give one greater access to a particular god, goes back even further than this, as we find temples being built on mountain tops.

The term in many English Bibles of "whole earth" is misleading. The Hebrew from which it was translated means "all of the land". Trying to force this whole earth idea instead of just an area of land can cause a great deal of misunderstanding. Given the context of these passages, it is discussing the land around Shinar, not the whole earth. Whole religious teachings are based on this unfortunate translation mistake. It may be that stories of the Great Flood and others are not worldwide conditions but only of local areas.

**Cornerstone Community Church**

PO Box 654 Lemon Grove, CA 91945-0654 – [www.cornerstonecommunityonline.org](http://www.cornerstonecommunityonline.org)

Comments and Suggestions for Topics may be sent to [llogue1@cox.net](mailto:llogue1@cox.net)