

Reversing Babel

Genesis 11:1-9, 12:1-3

Acts 2:1-12

David Feddes

11:1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” ⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.

⁶ And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.”

⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

^{12:2} Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God's imagers and sons

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth... and all **the sons of God** shouted for joy? (Job 38:4,7)

God said, "**Let us** make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26)

... Adam, **the son of God**. (Luke 3:38)

Sons of God

The heavens will praise your wonderful deed,
O Yahweh, even your faithfulness, in **the
assembly of the holy ones**. For who in the sky
is equal to Yahweh? Who is like Yahweh
among **the sons of God**, a God feared greatly
in **the council of the holy ones**, and awesome
above all surrounding him? O Yahweh **God of
hosts**, who is mighty like you? (Psalm 89:5-8)

Created to be imagers

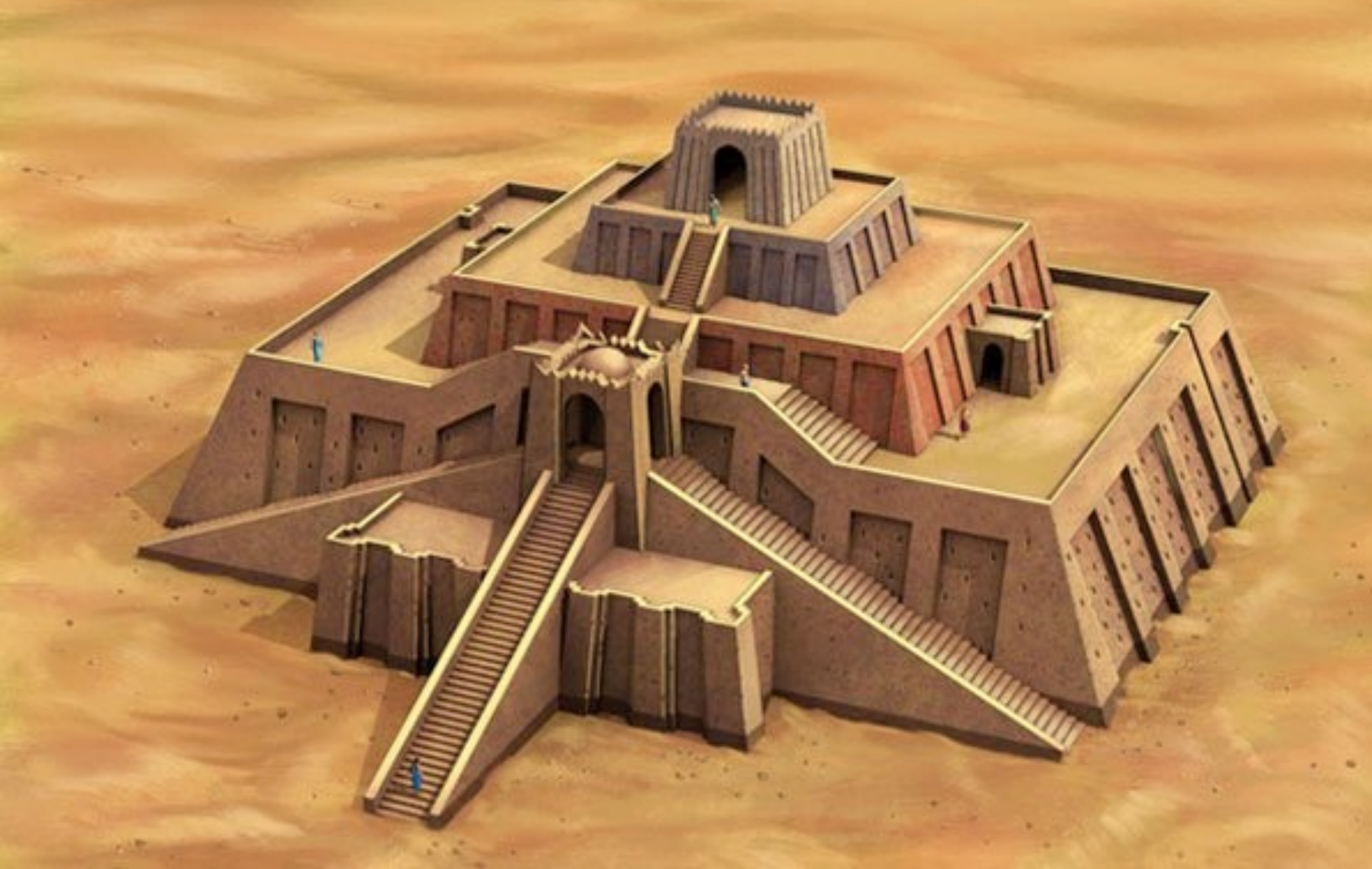
- Be God's earthly imagers who expand God's garden/temple to fill the earth.
- Earthly imagers would be God's council to interact with Him and act for God on earth, just as heavenly imagers were God's council to consult with God and act for Him in heavenly realms.

Failure and judgment

- Adam and Eve sinned. God's cherubim banned them from garden/temple of Eden.
- Fallen heavenly imagers (**sons of God**) interbred with human imagers, producing Nephilim giants. God sent the Flood.
- Humanity sinned at Babel. God scattered the nations, disowned them, and gave them over to other supernatural beings.



Great Ziggurat of Ur



Stairway from heaven

Confused and scattered

Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech... And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:7-9)

Divided and disowned

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples **according to the number of the sons of God**. But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. (Deut 32:8-9)

Divine Council

God (*elohim*) has taken his place in **the divine council**; in the midst of **the gods** (*elohim*) he holds judgment: “How long will you judge unjustly...? **You are gods, sons of the Most High**, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations! (Psalm 82)

Divided and disowned

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, **things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples** under the whole heaven. (Deuteronomy 4:19)

Watchers and princes

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones. (Daniel 4:17)

Now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. (Daniel 10:20)

A chosen people

- Humanity sinned at Babel. God scattered the nations, disowned them, and gave them over to other supernatural beings.
- God chose Abraham's offspring to carry on his purpose for creation, display his glory, and eventually bless all nations.

Conflicts and covenant

- God defeated Egypt's gods and brought his people out (Exodus).
- God and his council came to Sinai, made a covenant with Israel, and gave the tabernacle as a place to live among them.
- God defeated Canaan's gods, destroyed their giant offspring (Nephilim, Anakim), and gave Israel their land. (Joshua)

King, temple, holy land

- Israel did not totally destroy the giants and did not always reject their gods. (Judges)
- Philistine giants remained a threat. King David and his warriors destroyed them.
- Temple was to connect earth and heaven, an earthly picture of heavenly realities.
- Prophets kept calling Israel back to God.

Failure and exile

- Kingdom was divided and corrupted. Ten tribes built their own shrines and were defeated and deported. Later the kingdom of Judah was defeated, the temple was destroyed, and the Jews were exiled.
- Some exiles returned and built a lesser temple. But many Jews remained scattered, and nations were not blessed.

Messiah

- Jesus, Son of God, second Adam, prophet like Moses, Son of David, true temple, was faithful to God's purposes.
- Jesus' death paid for human sin and defeated the rebel supernatural beings.
- Jesus' resurrection launched a new creation in the Spirit's life and power.

Messianic missionaries

- Israel's exile was punishment for sin but also preparation for blessing all nations.
- Many Jews were in Jerusalem during the Pentecost feast, "devout men from every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5)
- In one day the Holy Spirit made them an army of 3,000 Messianic missionaries familiar with many cultures.

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel people build a manmade holy mountain, a stairway for gods to descend to their temple and image.
- On Pentecost God's Holy Spirit enters his true image and temple, the people of his church headed by Jesus.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel people want to control the god and make a name for themselves.
- On Pentecost God the Spirit fills people and glorifies the name of Jesus.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- Babel was Great Symbiosis: gods made us to feed and care for them, and if we satisfy them, they will also care for us.
- Pentecost was God's covenant of grace: God does not need us but offers his love in Christ as a free gift and calls us to rule and care for creation on his behalf.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel God comes down to judge and weaken rebel humans.
- On Pentecost God comes down to bless and empower believing humans.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel God confuses. He blocks sinful rebels from speaking the same language in their idol building and pride.
- On Pentecost God enlightens. The Spirit enables Jesus' disciples to praise and preach in other languages, and hearers understand and accept the gospel.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel God divides one group into many nations and scatters them.
- On Pentecost God gathers many nations into one church and unifies them.

Pentecost vs. Babel

- At Babel God hands all nations over to the rule of lesser supernatural beings (and starts over with Abraham/Israel).
- On Pentecost God calls nations away from evil powers and offers the nations his presence and covenant promises.

Spirit renews all things

- **Eden:** breathing life into God's imagers
- **Babel:** communicating, unifying, sending
- **Israel:** chosen nation to bless all nations
- **Sinai:** new covenant law written on hearts
- **Temple:** Jesus, church and believers
- **Exile:** ready-made mission force

Everyone

In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on **all people**... And **everyone who calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved... Repent and be baptized, **every one** of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for **all who are far off**—for **all whom the Lord our God will call**. (Acts 2:17-39)

Reversing Babel

- **Worship:** Enjoy being God's temple in Christ with people of every nation.
- **Witness:** Live by Spirit's inner law and use his gifts and power to call others.
- **Warfare:** Join God's armies and fight spiritual forces whose claim on any realm is broken by Jesus' victory.