

Genesis—Series Overview

Embarrassing Ancestors and Our Glorious Hope

The book of Genesis is all about God making an extravagantly gorgeous Creation to declare His glory and the horrifying result of our ancestors' rebellion against His kingly rule. It was written to remind us of our good God's promise to undo all the terror that our treason has wrought. It shows us our ancestors' faltering walk of faith and His faithful care for them, all the while paving the way for the coming King who would deliver us from ourselves and all who oppose our good God. The New Heavens and Earth will perfectly declare His praise.

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Please ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

Explore Your Own part of Babel's Treachery. Do you tend to impose your own will on others or seek safety in other ways? Can you tell when you are relying on yourself instead of trusting God? What specific tell-tale signs give you away? How does the account of Babel challenge your specific idols?

Rejoice in God's Grace! God has not left us to our own rebellion. He graciously stepped in and countered humanity's senseless rush to oblivion. How are His limits in your (our) life a means of grace? Consider ways that you can rejoice in His limits rather than rebel against them and Him.

Praise Christ! He has come to end our confusion and restore our communication with God and our fellow human beings.

Ezra-Nehemiah—Series Overview

A Community Restored for Worship

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah was written to encourage God's people returning after exile to believe the covenant promises and restore the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were being restored in the place of promise as a worshipping community. The restoration of purpose was far greater than their real estate. The place always has to do with what God promised would happen there.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
February 17th, 2019

Morning Service:

Genesis 10 – 11

Confusion on the Way to Heaven

1. The Way of Evil in Humanity—Tyranny and Fear.
2. God's Gracious Confounding and Scattering.
3. The Holy Spirit Has Begun Reversing the Curse of Babel.

It may be easy for us to see things like the tower of Babel as far removed from us, not only in time and space, but also in experience. We would never do such a thing! And even if we did, isn't God's response over-the-top?! Praise be to Christ! He shows us the ways we are guilty of the very same pride the tower builders demonstrated. Let us run to Christ together and trust Him to change our prideful hearts.

Evening Service:

Nehemiah 12: 1 – 47

Consecrating a Singing City

1. Jerusalem Was Designed to Be a Singing City.
2. We Are to Worship God in Community in Holy Song.
3. Christ Is Our Song and Song Leader.

As those who have returned from captivity and their descendants get settled into a rebuilt Jerusalem, we see more clearly the city's purpose in God's design. Why did He organize it in the way that He did. What does it reveal about His priorities? How does it challenge our understanding of what it means to follow Christ?

Taking Gathered Worship Home

What happens if our pride is left unchecked? How far would we go? God tells us in *Genesis* that the sky is the limit. Our hearts are so desperately broken and wicked that we will do the unthinkable to assuage our fears. Some act out in tyrannical ways. Others fall into defensive postures. But all of us left to ourselves will seek to satisfy our needs apart from God, even *against* Him. Babel not only warns us, but also whispers grace.

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to meet with Jesus. Ask Christ to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday AM

READ **Genesis 10-11**. DISCUSS: Why did the people not want to be spread across the earth? Whose name did they seek to glorify? What did you learn from the sermon? How can you (we) trust Christ together so that we aren't compelled to make our own name or driven by fear? PRAY for God to help us a congregation to more and more trust Christ by faith.

Sunday PM

READ today's passage: **Nehemiah 12:1-47**. Why is song an appropriate priority for God's people? Why is it necessary? REJOICE in God's greatness. PRAISE Him.

Monday

READ **Genesis 11:1-9; Deuteronomy 32:1-8**. DISCUSS: What did the Lord give the nations? Who set their boundaries? PRAY for God's majesty to be made known. REPENT of ways you (we) take for granted what God has given us. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in biblical gratitude.

Tuesday

READ **Genesis 11:1-9; Amos 9:7-10**. DISCUSS: What is God's relationship to the nations? How has He disciplined His people? MEDITATE on God's justice in ruling the nations. PRAY, "Lord God, there is none like You in all the earth. Thank You that You are trust-worthy and just. Thank You for loving us and giving us Your

righteousness. Amen."

Wednesday

READ **Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 17:22-31**. DISCUSS: What does it mean for God to judge the nations? How is He uniquely qualified? REJOICE for the ways God remembers all of us who are in Christ. PRAY, "Lord, You are just in all Your ways. We have a difficult time thinking about Your wrath in confusing languages and scattering people all around the globe. Teach us to see our sin for what it really is and how much it cost You, Lord Christ. Show us the grace of Your righteous right hand."

Thursday

READ **Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-47**. DISCUSS: How is the curse of Babel being undone with Pentecost? How does the spirit reverse confusion and scattering? REJOICE over the freedom we have in Christ. SING praises to the Lord. Use a favorite hymn or praise chorus to sing your praises to our King. PRAY, "Lord, Jesus, I am just as guilty as the people to whom Peter was preaching in Acts. Show me how I rebel against You and seek to solve my fears apart from You. Forgive me. Heal me. Amen."

Friday

READ **Genesis 10-11**. DISCUSS: What have you been learning this week? Why does sin always lead to confusion and separation instead of understanding and unity? REJOICE for Christ has set us free from our bondage to death. PRAY for your neighbors who are deceived and unable to even see their own sin for what it really is. Pray for their repentance. Reach out in friendship.

Saturday

PREPARE today for the gathered worship service tomorrow. READ **Genesis 12-15**. DISCUSS: What questions do you have? PLAN AHEAD: Do what you can today to free you up tomorrow to concentrate on worshipping Christ with His people. INVITE someone you know to join you for the worship service tomorrow. Ask Christ to draw them to Himself.