

Genesis 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Analysis

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.... This passage belongs to the primeval history section (Genesis 1-11) which establishes universal truths about God, humanity, sin, and divine purposes before focusing on Abraham and Israel. These chapters answer fundamental questions about human origins, the spread of wickedness, God's judgment, and the preservation of a righteous remnant.

Recurring patterns emerge: human sin escalating from individual disobedience to societal corruption, divine patience followed by judgment, gracious preservation of a remnant, and covenant promises ensuring redemptive purposes continue. The genealogies connect historical persons, demonstrate the fulfillment of divine promises (blessing and multiplication), and trace the line leading to Abraham and ultimately Christ.

Key theological themes in this section include:

1. sin's destructive progression affecting all humanity
2. God's righteous judgment while preserving mercy
3. human pride and autonomy opposing divine sovereignty
4. cultural development as both blessing and potential idolatry
5. God's sovereign plan advancing despite human rebellion.

These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding God's calling of Abraham and the covenant promises through which all nations will be blessed.

Historical Context

The primeval history (Genesis 1-11) parallels ancient Near Eastern traditions including Sumerian King Lists (pre-flood longevity), Akkadian flood traditions (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh), and Mesopotamian city foundation myths. However, Genesis demythologizes these traditions, presenting monotheistic history rather than polytheistic mythology. The genealogies connecting Adam to Noah to Abraham provide historical framework absent in pagan myths.

Archaeological evidence confirms ancient urbanization (chapter 4's cities), agricultural development, metallurgy, and musical instruments emerging in Mesopotamia's early history. The Babel account reflects Mesopotamian ziggurat construction (stepped pyramid temples), particularly in Babylon. Linguistic diversity requiring explanation was obvious to ancient peoples, making the Babel narrative culturally relevant.

For Israel in covenant with Yahweh, these chapters explained their relationship to surrounding nations. All peoples descended from Noah, but Israel descended from Shem through Abraham—chosen for blessing all nations. The flood demonstrated God's justice and mercy: judging wickedness while preserving the righteous. This pattern would recur throughout Israel's history, assuring them that God's covenant faithfulness endures despite judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How should this truth about Abrahamic Line shape our daily decisions and priorities?

3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּרֶד	וְהוֹ ה	לִרְאֹת	אֶת	הָעִיר	וְאֶת	הַמִּגְדָּל
came down	And the LORD	to see	H853	the city	H853	and the tower
H3381	H3068	H7200		H5892		H4026
אֲשֶׁר	בָּנוּ	בְּנֵי	הָאָדָם:			
H834	builted	which the children	of men			
	H1129	H1121	H120			

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 18:21 (Parallel theme): I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

John 3:13 (Parallel theme): And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Hebrews 4:13 (Parallel theme): Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Exodus 19:11 (References Lord): And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:20 (References Lord): And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

Psalms 11:4 (References Lord): The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.