

Genesis 11:1-9 and Technological Self-Totalization: A Theological Critique of Uncontrolled AI Ambition

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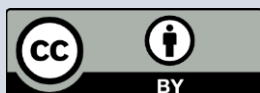
Genesis 11:1-9 critiques uncontrolled AI ambition as modern Babel, calling humanity back to creaturely limits.

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Abstract

The uncontrolled development of Artificial Intelligence raises fundamental questions about human limits and divine sovereignty. This article analyzes the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11:1-9 as a theological critique of uncontrolled AI ambition. Using a historical-grammatical exegetical method with attention to the Hebrew text, this study identifies four patterns of human ambition that parallel contemporary AI development, namely autonomy from God, centralized control, technological self-totalization, and self-glorification. The findings show that God's intervention at Babel was not merely punitive but redemptive, establishing limits that preserve authentic human flourishing. The article argues that the crisis posed by AI is not merely ethical but spiritual, touching the core of what it means to be human before God. The theological and pastoral implications include recovering a theology of limits, cultivating humility, replacing fear with trust, embracing diversity, and living with creaturely dependence on God. This study contributes to the development of an Evangelical theological response to AI that is attentive to the Asian context.

Keywords: *Tower of Babel; Artificial Intelligence; Technological Self-Totalization; Divine Limits; Evangelical Theology*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally altered human workflows, learning processes, communication, and creative endeavors. Large language models, including ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, have popularized artificial intelligence by making it accessible to anyone with internet access (Makris & Abou-Ismael, 2024). Across sectors such as healthcare, education, the creative industries, and scholarly publishing, AI provides enhanced efficiency, personalization, and unprecedented opportunities. Nevertheless, these promises raise essential questions regarding constraints, ethics, and the future of humanity. The drive for artificial intelligence development frequently surpasses the scope of ethical and theological considerations. Beyond mere

technical concerns, this goal constitutes a spiritual quest that touches upon the core of human being in the presence of God.

The debate concerning human limitations and ambition is longstanding. The narrative presented in Genesis 11:1-9 bears significant relevance to the current situation. During that period, the people were unified, stating, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4). Their objective was to establish a reputation, achieve autonomy, and define their identity independently of God; they aimed to ascend to the heavens through their own power and, consequently, to become like God. This narrative transcends architectural pride, representing instead a fundamental spiritual rebellion (Alexander, 2018). Observing human activity, God remarked, "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" (Gen. 11:6).

The divine observed that human ambition was boundless. This image illustrates unchecked technological ambition: a drive that seeks total achievement without regard for the will of God (Reinke, 2021). Subsequently, God confounded their language and dispersed them across the face of the earth. Rather than destroying the tower, God disrupted human language to prevent the collective execution of a project that challenged His authority (Andrews, 2023). The narrative of the Tower of Babel remains a significant account that retains relevance in a contemporary context. Using a mimetic-hermeneutical framework, Orong and Saryono interpret Genesis 11:1-9 to show how the Tower of Babel narrative depicts humanity's inclination toward technological self-totalization fueled by immanent mimetic desire (Orong & Saryono, 2026). Kim draws a parallel between the Tower of Babel and contemporary AI, characterizing both as closed systems of signification that preclude transcendence (Kim, 2026). Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025) characterize the technological drive toward transcendence—including transhumanism and the quest for digital immortality—as a neo-Babel project, wherein humanity attempts to attain divine status independently of God. Kanu, Pilani, and Nwadiakor interpret the Babel narrative as a warning against human ambition lacking moral or spiritual foundations, suggesting that human agency is limited without divine guidance (Kanu et al., 2026). Lévy (2021) interprets the myth of Babel as an early illustration of how urbanity and globality are perceived as manifestations of human hubris. Fearrien (2025) emphasizes the inherent limitations of humanity when attempting to assume divine roles. Boyd (2019) contends that the Tower of Babel narrative focuses less on the origin of languages and more on the location of authority. Merilyn (2020) concludes that the Babel narrative highlights God's appreciation for diversity, contrasting with the people's objective to prevent dispersion and maintain unity. Soal and Henry (2018) interpret the divine division of languages at Babel as a theological explanation for the centrifugal scattering of nations following the previous centripetal gathering, which they view as a human rebellion against the divine command to inhabit the entire earth. Diamond (2021) interprets the Tower of Babel episode as a demonstration of humanity exceeding its capacity due to arrogance and hubris. Ramírez-Johnson (2020) examines whether the linguistic diversity in Genesis 11:1-9 functions as a divine curse punishing the pride of Babel or as a corrective measure against their pursuit of

uniformity. Ma (2021) interprets Genesis 11:1-9 as a metanarrative that illustrates dangerous and subversive patterns, such as the idolization of power and influence.

Although much research has been conducted on the Tower of Babel and on the development of AI, a significant gap remains. Research on the Tower of Babel tends to focus on exegetical and theological analysis without connecting it to the contemporary phenomenon of AI. Conversely, research on AI tends to focus on technical, ethical, and social aspects without providing an adequate theological framework for assessing the ambition behind it. Kim (2026) and Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025) have indeed connected Babel with AI, but their analyses are more philosophical and less attentive to the Asian context. However, few studies have specifically connected the narrative of Genesis 11:1-9 with uncontrolled AI ambition from the perspective of Evangelical theology and the Asian context. Yet the Babel narrative offers a highly relevant framework of critique for assessing and correcting unlimited technological ambition. This research seeks to fill that gap by offering a theological reading of Genesis 11:1-9 contextualized with the contemporary phenomenon of AI.

This article contends that the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11:1-9 offers a profound theological critique of unrestrained AI ambition. This ambition stems from human pride, which strives for autonomy from God, attempts to reach the heavens through self-reliance, and seeks to establish its own reputation regardless of the divine will. The Babel narrative illustrates that God restricts such ambition from proceeding without limits. He descends, observes, and intervenes to constrain human ambition. Within the field of artificial intelligence, this divine action serves as a reminder that certain limits must be respected, specific domains must remain exclusive to God, and the creation of technology must be characterized by human humility. This article pursues three objectives: first, to analyze Genesis 11:1-9 by examining its narrative structure, Hebrew terminology, and theological significance; second, to critique unrestrained AI ambition through the lens of the Babel narrative; and third, to develop theological and pastoral implications for believers navigating the rapid advancement of AI.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a historical-grammatical exegetical method and theological analysis of Genesis 11:1-9. The historical-grammatical approach was chosen because the research aims to uncover the original meaning of the Babel narrative through attention to narrative structure, Hebrew terminology, and the historical-social context of the ancient Near East (Kristiawan, 2026). The primary source is the Masoretic text of Genesis 11:1-9 as preserved in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, with key Hebrew terms such as שֵׁם (*shem*, name), נָבִלָה (*navlah*, let us confuse), and לֹא יִבְבֹּטֶר (*lo yibbatser*, nothing will be restrained) analyzed in their syntactical and semantic contexts. The English translation used for this study is the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Secondary sources were identified and selected through Google Scholar, Garuda, and accredited theology journals using keywords such as Genesis 11, Tower of Babel, artificial intelligence, technological hubris,

and divine limits. The search was limited to publications from 2015 to 2026, with the exception of lexicons and classical sources, which are referential in nature. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and Hebrew lexicons relevant to the topic. Exclusion criteria were popular articles, blogs, and non-academic sources. From this search, 26 sources were selected and analyzed thematically.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. The first stage involved an exegetical analysis of Genesis 11:1-9 to identify the narrative's critique of human ambition. This stage includes attention to the literary structure of the narrative, the wordplay between שֵׁם (*shem*, name) and שֵׁם (*Shem*, the ancestor in Genesis 11:10-26), and the ironic folk etymology of בָּבֶל (*Bavel*, Babel) from בָּלַל (*balal*, to confuse). The second stage involved a comparative analysis of the Babel narrative and the phenomenon of uncontrolled AI ambition using the collected literature. This stage employs an analogical hermeneutical framework that identifies structural parallels between the ancient narrative and contemporary technological ambition. The analogical approach was chosen because it respects the historical particularity of the biblical text while allowing for meaningful application to contemporary contexts. Safeguards against eisegesis include attention to the historical-grammatical meaning of the text and the canonical context of Genesis 11 within the broader biblical narrative. The third stage involved a theological synthesis to formulate implications for Christian faith in the age of AI. The qualitative data analysis is used to organize, interpret, and synthesize findings from various sources into a coherent argument. The hermeneutical approach was chosen because the text of Genesis 11:1-9 is not merely a historical document but the Word of God that carries authority to address the contemporary crisis of technological ambition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Critique of Technological Self-Totalization in Genesis 11:1-9

Genesis 11:1-9 is one of the most theologically dense passages in the Primeval History (Kristiawan, 2026). The narrative opens with a statement about the unity of humanity. The text reads וַיְהִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים (*vayehi khol ha'arets safah achat u-devarim ahadim*), which means "the whole earth had one language and the same words." The phrase שָׁפָה אֶחָת (*safah achat*) literally means "one lip," which indicates not merely a shared vocabulary but a shared orientation of speech and purpose (Gesenius & Tregelles, 2003). The phrase וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים (*u-devarim ahadim*) means "the same words," which suggests a unified discourse that allowed for collective action without dissent (Marilyn, 2020). This unity is not presented as a blessing in the narrative but as the precondition for a project that God will later disrupt. The narrative then records the migration to the east and the settlement in the land of Shinar. The movement eastward is significant because in Genesis, moving east often signifies moving away from the presence of God, as in the expulsion from Eden (Alexander, 2018).

The heart of the narrative lies in the speech of the people. They said to one another, **הָבָה נִלְבְּנָה לֵבְנִים וְנִשְׂרַפָּה לְשִׂרְפָּה** (*havah nilbenah levenim ve-nisrefah li-srefah*), which means “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” The use of the hortatory imperative **הָבָה** (*havah*) indicates a collective decision and a shared will to act. They then said, **הָבָה נִבְנֶה-לָּנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל וְרֵאשׁוּ בְּשִׁמִּים וְנַעֲשֶׂה-לָּנוּ שֵׁם** (*havah nivneh-lanu ir u-migdal ve-ro'sho va-shamayim ve-na'aseh-lanu shem*), meaning “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.” The phrase **נִבְנֶה** (*nivneh-lanu*) means “let us build for ourselves,” indicating self-centered action. The phrase **וְנַעֲשֶׂה-לָּנוּ שֵׁם** (*ve-na'aseh-lanu shem*) means “let us make for ourselves a name,” indicating the desire for self-glorification and autonomous identity (Orong & Saryono, 2026). The stated motive is **פֶּן-נִפְּוֶץ** (*pen-nafuts*), meaning “lest we be dispersed,” which reveals a fear of dispersion and a desire to maintain centralized control. The narrative thus presents a humanity that is united, ambitious, and fearful, seeking security and significance through technological achievement and centralized power (Kanu et al., 2026).

The divine response is introduced with the phrase **וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה לִרְאוֹת אֶת-הָעִיר וְאֶת-הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם** (*vayered YHWH lir'ot et-ha'ir ve-et-ha-migdal asher banu benei ha'adam*), meaning “the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the children of man had built.” The verb **וַיֵּרֶד** (*vayered*, came down) is deeply ironic. The tower was built to reach the heavens, but God had to come down to see it (Fearrien, 2025). The structure that was meant to bridge the gap between earth and heaven was so insignificant from the divine perspective that God had to descend to inspect it. The LORD then said, **הֵן עַם אֶחָד וּשְׂפָה, אַחַת לְכָלָם וְזֶה הַחִלָּם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא-יִבְצֹר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת** (*hen am echad ve-safah achat le-khulam ve-zeh hachilam la'asot ve-atah lo-yibbatser mehem kol asher yazmu la'asot*), meaning “Behold, they are one people and they have one language for all, and this is only the beginning of what they will do, and now nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them.” The phrase **לֹא-יִבְצֹר** (*lo-yibbatser*) means nothing will be restrained or prevented (Koehler-Baumgartner, 2001). The divine assessment is not that the tower itself is dangerous but that the underlying ambition, if left unchecked, will lead to limitless transgression. God

does not oppose technological advancement per se; rather, He opposes the autonomy and self-glorification that drives it (Reinke, 2021).

The divine action follows. The LORD said, **הָבָה יֵרְדָה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שְׂפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׂפַת רֵעֵהוּ** (*havah nerdah ve-navlah sham sefatam asher lo yishme'u ish sefat re'ehu*), meaning "Come, let us go down and confuse their language there so that they will not understand one another's speech." The verb **וְנִבְלָה** (*ve-navlah*) comes from the root **בָּלַל** (*balal*) meaning to mix or confuse (Brown et al., 2000). The narrative concludes, **וַיִּפֶץ יְהוָה אֶתָם מִשָּׁם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחְדְּלוּ לִבְנוֹת הָעִיר** (*vayafets YHWH otam mi-sham al-penei khol-ha'arets vayachdelu livnot ha'ir*), meaning "the LORD scattered them from there over the face of all the earth and they left off building the city." The place is named **בָּבֶל** (*Bavel*), which sounds like the Hebrew verb meaning to confuse, **בָּלַל** (*balal*). The narrative thus ends with the disruption of human unity and the scattering of nations. The wordplay between **שֵׁם** (*shem*, name) and **שֵׁם** (*Shem*, the ancestor in Genesis 11:10-26) is theologically significant. The builders sought to make a name for themselves, but the only name that endures beyond Babel is the name of Shem, through whom the line of blessing continues. The narrative's placement between Genesis 10 and Genesis 11:10-26 frames Babel as an interlude within the genealogies of the nations, emphasizing that God's redemptive plan continues despite human rebellion (Andrews, 2023).

The third pattern critiques the human desire for technological self-totalization. In this context, technological self-totalization refers to the attempt to use technology to attain complete self-sufficiency, transcend human limitations, and establish ultimate meaning and identity independently of God. The builders employed technology, specifically bricks and mortar, to achieve their objective. Technology is not inherently malevolent; however, it becomes idolatrous when used as a tool for humanity to transcend its natural limitations and usurp divine authority (Kim, 2026). The fourth pattern involves a critique of the human impulse toward self-glorification. The builders expressed a desire to "make a name" for themselves, seeking recognition, honor, and significance. They sought to leave a lasting legacy. The quest for self-glorification serves as the fundamental cause of the Babel project. The fifth pattern involves the disclosure of the divine limit. Divine providence restricts the scope of human ambition. He interferes, obscures communication, and disperses humanity. Rather than being an exercise of arbitrary power, this divine intervention represents an act of mercy that sustains the potential for authentic human flourishing (Boyd, 2019). The dispersal of humanity and the proliferation of languages represent both a challenge and an advantage. By preventing the concentration of power, this system facilitates the flourishing of diverse cultures and peoples (Diamond, 2021). The narrative provides a nuanced examination of human ambition, divine intervention, and the paradoxical benefits of limitation.

One must address the alternative interpretation of Babel as a narrative concerning cultural diversity rather than one centered on pride. Certain interpreters contend that the dispersion of nations and the proliferation of languages represent a positive outcome,

signifying God's primary intention for humanity to populate the earth with diverse cultures. Although this interpretation captures a significant aspect of the narrative, it does not fully account for the complexities of the text. The narrative depicts the scattering as a result of divine judgment rather than the builders' original intention. The construction workers preferred to remain together. They sought to maintain a unified presence in a single location to establish their reputation. The divine dispersal of these groups serves to both penalize their pride and maintain the potential for diversity. These two interpretations are compatible with one another. The dispersal embodies both judgment and mercy. The work serves as a judgment on human pride and the mercy required to protect humanity from the absolute ambitions that lead to tyranny. This interpretation aligns with the broader biblical narrative, where divine judgments frequently incorporate the potential for redemption.

This exegetical analysis demonstrates that Genesis 11:1-9 represents more than a narrative regarding ancient architecture. This work offers a significant theological critique of human ambition, specifically targeting the pursuit of autonomy from God, centralized control, technological self-totalization, and self-glorification. The narrative demonstrates that unchecked ambition triggers divine intervention and disrupts human endeavors. This critique directly relates to the current phenomenon.

The Ambition of Uncontrolled AI and the Genesis 11:1-9 Critique

Modern Artificial Intelligence development mirrors the ambitions seen in the Tower of Babel narrative. What started as a scientific pursuit to engineer machines capable of human-like cognition has transitioned into a global competition for technological dominance. The progression of artificial intelligence has become increasingly irreversible. Dwivedi and De (2026) observe that although governments initially attempted to implement precautionary restrictions, advanced language models have successfully passed rigorous Turing tests. This progress indicates that the technology had already exceeded the regulatory thresholds originally intended for its control. This relentless momentum evokes the builders of Babel, who declared, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens." They did not obtain authorization. They failed to seek divine guidance. Driven by ambition, they acted with confidence in their capabilities and a shared sense of purpose.

Before proceeding, one must define "uncontrolled AI ambition." Uncontrolled AI ambition is defined as the pursuit of artificial intelligence development lacking sufficient ethical, theological, or regulatory oversight. This trend is motivated by the belief that technological advancement is inherently beneficial and that regulatory constraints represent obstacles to innovation. This constitutes a departure from responsible or governed AI development, which requires ethical reflection, regulatory oversight, and consideration of the common good. This article does not oppose artificial intelligence in its entirety. It rejects the Babel mindset, which attempts to utilize technology to seize divine authority and establish human prestige independent of God. This distinction is significant. When developed and implemented responsibly, AI can serve as a significant instrument for promoting human

flourishing. Nevertheless, when the development of AI is motivated by the same ambition that characterized the builders of Babel, it risks provoking a similar divine response.

A significant parallel exists in the shared aspiration for transcendence. Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025) contend that the technological drive toward transcendence—exemplified by transhumanism and the quest for digital immortality—represents a neo-Babel project where humanity attempts to achieve godlike status in the absence of God. The architects at Babel intended to reach the heavens. Their objective was to bridge the divide between humanity and the divine. They sought to establish a reputation that would surpass their human limitations. Similarly, modern AI development aims to surpass human limitations via technological advancement. The pursuit of artificial general intelligence, the objective of uploading consciousness to digital platforms, and the quest for radical life extension all demonstrate an intention to transcend the human limitations established by God. Kim argues that modern AI parallels the theological hubris found in the Tower of Babel narrative. Both instances create a closed system of meaning that prevents transcendence by removing the distinction between naming and being named (Kim, 2026). The architects of Babel sought to establish a lasting reputation. Developers of artificial intelligence seek to construct systems capable of defining reality. In both instances, humanity attempts to claim the divine authority of naming and defining.

This article agrees with Kim that AI represents a closed system of signification that forecloses transcendence. However, it goes further by arguing that this closure is not merely philosophical but spiritual. It is a rejection of the living God who alone has the authority to name and define. The article also agrees with Sangwa and Mutabazi that transhumanism constitutes a neo-Babel project. However, it extends their analysis by showing that the roots of this project lie in the ancient human desire for autonomy, a desire that is as old as Eden and as new as the latest AI model. Where this article differs from Kim is in its emphasis on the Asian context. Kim's analysis is philosophical and draws primarily on Western philosophical sources. This article argues that the critique of AI ambition must be contextualized in the specific realities of Asian societies, including the rapid adoption of AI in countries such as Indonesia, the concentration of AI power in a few global tech giants, and the impact of AI on low-resource languages and marginalized communities.

Another parallel is the desire for centralized control. The builders at Babel feared being scattered, so they sought to consolidate power in one place. They built a city and a tower to maintain unity and prevent dispersion. In the contemporary context, AI development is dominated by a small number of technology giants that control vast amounts of data, computing power, and algorithmic infrastructure. The concentration of AI capabilities in the hands of a few corporations or nations creates a new form of centralized power that rivals the centralized control sought by the Babel builders. Orong and Saryono argue that the Babel narrative illustrates humanity's tendency toward technological self-totalization driven by immanent mimetic desire, which is a desire to become like the other, to imitate and surpass, leading to a totalizing system that excludes transcendence (Orong & Saryono, 2026). This totalizing tendency is evident in the way AI systems are increasingly used to shape public

opinion, influence elections, and control access to information. The builders at Babel wanted to control their destiny. AI developers want to control the future of intelligence itself.

However, it must be acknowledged that open-source AI and decentralized approaches offer a counter-narrative to the concentration of power. Some argue that open-source models democratize access to AI and prevent any single entity from monopolizing the technology. While this is a valid point, the Babel narrative suggests that the problem is not merely who controls the technology but the spirit in which it is developed. Even decentralized projects can be driven by the same ambition for self-glorification and autonomy from God. The question is not whether AI is centralized or decentralized but whether it is oriented toward the glory of God or the glory of humanity.

The Babel narrative also critiques the human desire for self-glorification. The builders said, "Let us make a name for ourselves." They wanted recognition, honor, and significance. They wanted to be remembered. This desire for self-glorification is mirrored in the AI industry's obsession with benchmarks, leaderboards, and public recognition. Companies compete to demonstrate the superiority of their models. Researchers vie for citations and awards. The pursuit of artificial general intelligence is often framed as the ultimate achievement of human civilization. Reinke interprets the Tower of Babel as an attempt by humanity to achieve self-existence and dethrone God by opening a portal to heaven through technological and religious unity (Reinke, 2021). The builders wanted to ascend to the heavens. AI developers want to create intelligence that surpasses human intelligence. In both cases, the ultimate goal is to transcend the creaturely limitations that God has established.

The Babel narrative also reveals the limits of human ambition. God came down to see the city and the tower. The verb "came down" is deeply ironic. The tower was built to reach the heavens, but God had to come down to see it. The structure that was meant to bridge the gap between earth and heaven was so insignificant from the divine perspective that God had to descend to inspect it. This irony is directly relevant to contemporary AI ambition. The quest to create superintelligence and achieve digital immortality is often presented as the ultimate achievement of humanity. But from the divine perspective, these ambitions may be as insignificant as a tower that cannot reach the heavens. God sees the true nature of human ambition. He sees the pride, the self-glorification, and the desire for autonomy. He also acts to limit it.

The divine assessment in Genesis 11:6 is crucial. The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people and they have one language for all, and this is only the beginning of what they will do, and now nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them." God's concern is not with the tower itself but with the underlying ambition that, if left unchecked, will lead to limitless transgression. The same concern applies to contemporary AI. The issue is not AI technology per se but the ambition that drives it. If humanity is united in its pursuit of AI without regard for God's will, if humanity believes that nothing is impossible, then the same divine limit will be encountered. Andrews interprets the Tower of Babel account as revealing how human pride, centralized power, and false religion combined to challenge divine sovereignty, leading to God's intervention to preserve His purpose (Andrews, 2023). The same combination of

pride, centralized power, and false religion can be seen in the contemporary AI industry. The belief in technological salvation, the concentration of power in tech giants, and the quasi-religious fervor surrounding AI development all reflect the spirit of Babel.

The divine action at Babel was to confuse language and scatter humanity. This action was not merely punitive but also redemptive. The scattering prevented humanity from fully realizing a project that would have led to total self-destruction. The confusion of language introduced diversity and prevented the concentration of power. Ramírez-Johnson discusses whether the diversity of languages in Genesis 11:1-9 should be read as a curse from God to punish Babel's pride or as a remedy against Babel's attempt at uniformity (Ramírez-Johnson, 2020). The introduction of diverse languages functions as a divine antidote against human pride and an effort to restore God's original plan for humanity to spread and multiply. In the context of AI, the divine limit may take the form of technical failures, ethical dilemmas, regulatory barriers, or social resistance. These limits are not obstacles to progress but safeguards against the kind of totalizing ambition that characterized Babel. Ma interprets Genesis 11:1-9 as a metanarrative illustrating dangerous, subversive patterns, including making idols of power and influence (Ma, 2021). The Babel narrative warns against the idolization of technology and the subversion of authentic human community by technological systems that promise unity but deliver alienation.

The Babel narrative also critiques the fear that motivates technological ambition. The builders at Babel were motivated by fear, specifically the apprehension of being scattered. Their objectives were to maintain control, preserve unity, and secure their future. Similar anxieties are also evident in contemporary discourse regarding artificial intelligence. Concerns persist regarding the potential for obsolescence, social exclusion, and the loss of competitive advantage. States are concerned that failure to develop artificial intelligence will provide a strategic advantage to their adversaries. Companies are concerned that failing to adopt AI may provide their competitors with a significant advantage. There is a concern among individuals that failing to adopt AI may lead to professional obsolescence. This apprehension motivates the continuous acceleration of AI development, frequently prioritizing progress over ethical standards and human well-being. Kanu, Pilani, and Nwadiolor suggest that the Babel narrative illustrates the dangers of human ambition and collective action when unsupported by moral or spiritual foundations, suggesting that human agency is restricted without divine guidance (Kanu et al., 2026). The fear of fragmentation, whether exemplified by Babel or the modern AI race, prompts actions motivated by anxiety instead of trust in God.

The Babel narrative ultimately points to the need for humility and submission to God's will. The builders at Babel wanted to make a name for themselves, but the only name that endures from this story is the name of the place where they were scattered. They wanted to reach the heavens, but they were scattered over the earth. Their ambition was thwarted by divine intervention. The same fate awaits any human endeavor that seeks to exalt itself above God. Alexander interprets the Tower of Babel as the prototypical godless city, where people unite to achieve great things motivated by pride and ambition to take control of heaven, representing humanity's attempt to exalt the creature over the Creator (Alexander, 2018). The

lesson for the contemporary AI age is clear. AI is a powerful tool that can be used for good or for ill. But when AI development is driven by the same ambition that drove the builders at Babel, when it seeks to make a name for humanity rather than to glorify God, when it seeks to transcend creaturely limits rather than to steward creation responsibly, then it invites the same divine response. Boyd argues that the Tower of Babel episode is not primarily about language but about where authority lies, specifically regarding city and temple building (Boyd, 2019). The question for AI is not merely technical but theological. Who has authority over the development and deployment of AI? Who defines its purpose and limits? If the answer is humanity alone, then the project is a Babel project. If the answer is God, then AI can be a tool for human flourishing under divine sovereignty.

Lévy explains that in the context of Genesis 11, the human limitation is the self-organization of the human world and the autonomy of humans before God, which motivated God's reaction (Lévy, 2021). The same limitation applies to AI. When humanity organizes its world autonomously, without reference to God, it invites divine disruption. Soal and Henry interpret the Babel incident as resulting in the confusion of human languages and the scattering of nations, serving as a symbol of the confusion that arises when humans operate without God (Soal & Henry, 2018). The confusion and scattering at Babel are not merely historical events but a paradigm of what happens when humanity seeks to operate independently of God.

This analysis demonstrates that the Babel narrative serves as a significant framework for critiquing the risks of uncontrolled AI ambition. The similarities are notable. Both are characterized by a desire for transcendence, a quest for centralized control, a pursuit of self-glorification, and a fear of limitation. Both are motivated by pride and a desire for autonomy from God. Both elements invite divine intervention, which constrains human ambition and maintains the possibility of authentic flourishing. The Babel narrative does not inherently condemn technology. It rejects the spirit of Babel, which attempts to use technology to seize divine authority and establish human prestige independently of God. This critique warrants consideration within the context of the contemporary AI era. It is necessary to remember that limits must be respected, that God observes and acts, and that the fear of the Lord constitutes the beginning of wisdom, including the discernment required to develop and utilize AI responsibly.

Merilyn concludes that the Tower of Babel story emphasizes God's valuation of diversity, which contrasts with the people's desire to avoid being scattered and remain unified (Merilyn, 2020). This valuation of diversity is also relevant to AI. The development of AI should not aim at uniformity or centralized control but should respect and celebrate the diversity of human cultures and languages. This is particularly relevant in the Asian context, where AI's bias toward English and other high-resource languages threatens to marginalize low-resource languages and cultures. Diamond reads the Tower of Babel episode as an example of humanity overreaching its limits, driven by arrogance and hubris, by attempting to encroach upon the transcendent domain (Diamond, 2021). The lesson for AI is that there are domains that belong to God alone. Human intelligence, however advanced, is not divine intelligence. AI, however

powerful, is not God. The recognition of this limit is the beginning of wisdom in the age of AI. Kim argues that authentic existence in the algorithmic age requires a second nakedness, a deliberate refusal of egotistical self-assertion that reopens creaturely dependence, so that God's grace becomes operative in the common life of humanity (Kim, 2026). The Babel builders covered themselves with bricks and mortar. The new nakedness requires a stripping away of the technological fig leaves that hide human vulnerability and dependence on God. It requires a recognition that humanity is not self-sufficient, that intelligence is not salvation, and that the only true foundation for human flourishing is the grace of God.

The critique of AI ambition presented in the Babel narrative also carries implications for the development and deployment of AI. It questions the premise that technological advancement is fundamentally beneficial. This challenges the assumption that increasing data, computing power, and algorithmic complexity will inherently produce positive societal outcomes. It contests the centralisation of power within a limited number of major technology corporations. It contests the competition for AI supremacy motivated by fear. Rather, it advocates for an alternative approach characterized by humility, respect for limits, and an appreciation for diversity. This method prioritizes the common good and recognizes the sovereignty of God. Rather than rejecting artificial intelligence entirely, this approach seeks to align its development with divine purposes instead of human ambitions. Rather than fearing AI, the objective is to utilize it wisely and responsibly. It does not revere AI but rather honors the Creator, who alone is worthy of worship. While the Babel narrative serves as a warning, it also functions as an invitation. It calls for humanity to abandon the pursuit of self-glorification and autonomy in favor of walking in the fear of the Lord. It encourages individuals to acknowledge that genuine greatness stems not from striving toward transcendence through human endeavors, but from practicing humility before God to receive His grace.

Theological and Pastoral Implications for Believers in the Age of AI

The Babel narrative functions not simply as an ancient warning, but as a resonant message for the contemporary church. Theological critiques of unrestrained AI development significantly influence how believers perceive their identity, vocation, and witness within the digital era. Primarily, this suggests that believers need to reclaim a theology of limits. The construction workers at Babel rejected all constraints. Their objectives were to attain celestial status, establish lasting renown, and assert control over their own destiny. The refusal to accept boundaries constitutes the essence of sin. In the era of artificial intelligence, the impulse to reject constraints is increasingly significant. The discourse surrounding technological advancement suggests a future of boundless potential. However, the Tower of Babel narrative suggests that limits are not barriers to human flourishing, but rather necessary conditions for it. During creation, God instituted boundaries that are fundamentally good. While AI can augment human capabilities, it cannot render humans divine. Acknowledging this limitation marks the onset of wisdom during the era of AI (Kim, 2026).

The second implication is that believers must cultivate humility in the face of technological power. The builders at Babel were driven by pride and the desire for self-

glorification. This same pride can infect the way believers engage with AI. There is a temptation to believe that technological mastery is a sign of human greatness. But the Babel narrative reminds us that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Humility does not mean rejecting technology. It means recognizing that all technological power is derivative and dependent on God. It means using AI not for self-glorification but for service to God and neighbor. In concrete terms, humility means practicing discernment before adopting new AI tools, asking whether they serve the common good or merely enhance efficiency, and ensuring that human relationships are not replaced by algorithmic interactions (Reinke, 2021).

The third implication is that believers must resist the fear that drives the AI race. The builders at Babel acted out of fear, specifically the fear of being scattered. This fear led them to seek centralized control and to build a monument to their own security. In the contemporary AI race, fear is a powerful motivator. Nations fear falling behind. Corporations fear losing competitive advantage. Individuals fear becoming obsolete. The Babel narrative invites believers to replace fear with trust: trust in the God who sees, who acts, and who limits human ambition for the sake of human flourishing. This trust does not lead to passivity but to responsible action. It leads to engagement with AI from a posture of faith rather than fear (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025).

The fourth implication is that believers must embrace the diversity that God values. The scattering of nations at Babel and the multiplication of languages are not merely a punishment but also a blessing. It prevents the concentration of power and allows for the flourishing of diverse cultures. In the age of AI, there is a risk that AI will homogenize human culture, imposing a single language and worldview. This risk is particularly acute in Asia, where AI's bias toward English threatens to marginalize local languages. The reversal of Babel at Pentecost confirms that God's redemptive plan embraces linguistic and cultural diversity rather than suppressing it (Soal & Henry, 2018). AI should be developed and used in ways that respect and celebrate this diversity (Merilyn, 2020).

The fifth implication is that believers must live with a second nakedness. Kim argues that authentic existence in the algorithmic age requires a second nakedness, a deliberate refusal of egotistical self-assertion that reopens creaturely dependence on God (Kim, 2026). This concept resonates with the biblical theme of humility. However, it must be grounded in the doctrine of justification by faith. The believer's identity is not found in technological achievement or in the stripping away of all achievements, but in the finished work of Christ. The second nakedness is not a human achievement but a response to grace. In the age of AI, the temptation is to cover ourselves with technological achievements, to hide our vulnerability behind algorithms and data. The second nakedness calls us out of hiding. It invites us to stand before God without pretense, to acknowledge our limits, and to receive the grace that alone can make us whole.

This theological framework has several pastoral implications. Church leaders and pastors are responsible for preparing believers to address the ethical complexities presented by artificial intelligence. It is necessary to teach a theology of limits that challenges the narrative of unlimited technological progress. They should demonstrate humility when

engaging with technology. It is necessary to establish forums for transparent discussion regarding the fears and anxieties produced by AI. They should promote AI policies that benefit society and safeguard vulnerable populations. In the era of artificial intelligence, the church is called to function as a community of wisdom—one that recognizes its inherent limitations, places its trust in God, prizes diversity, and exists within the freedom of grace.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Genesis 11:1-9 narrative of the Tower of Babel provides a significant theological critique of unchecked AI ambition. It highlights a recurring pattern of human hubris characterized by a desire for autonomy from God, centralized control, technological self-totalization, and self-glorification, all motivated by fear instead of trust. This research primarily identifies structural parallels between the builders of Babel and contemporary AI developers. It demonstrates that the crisis presented by AI is not solely ethical but also spiritual, affecting the fundamental essence of human identity before God. This research contends that the divine intervention at Babel served a redemptive rather than purely punitive purpose, instituting boundaries that safeguard the potential for genuine human flourishing. Modern churches should reclaim a theology of limits, foster humility, substitute fear with trust, embrace the diversity valued by God, and exist in a state of vulnerability that recognizes their dependence on God.

This study is subject to several limitations. Initially, the study adopts a confessional approach, interpreting Genesis 11:1-9 as authoritative Scripture. Second, the study focuses on a single biblical text rather than engaging the broader biblical witness regarding technology and ambition. Third, the method is analogical rather than empirical, drawing parallels between the ancient narrative and contemporary AI without claiming a direct causal connection. Fourth, the rapid evolution of AI literature means that some sources may soon become outdated. Fifth, although the Asian context is mentioned, it lacks empirical development. Future research should facilitate a dialogue between this theological framework and empirical studies investigating how Christians in Asia navigate daily ethical dilemmas concerning AI. This research examines whether critiques of Babel align with the lived experiences of believers. Furthermore, it seeks to refine the pastoral strategies required to prepare the church for faithful witness within the algorithmic age.

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This study did not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, or personal data requiring ethical approval.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could influence the research process, writing, or publication of this article.

DECLARATION OF AI USAGE

The authors used DeepSeek for paraphrase, language editing, translation assistance, and harmonization of terminology across the manuscript. The authors reviewed, edited, verified, and take full responsibility for the final content. The original ideas, research design, exegetical analysis, theological interpretation, and conclusions presented in this article are entirely the original work of the authors. No generative Artificial Intelligence tool was used to generate the scientific content, analysis, interpretation, or conclusions of this article.

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