

Bible Story Time 2 - The Tower of Babel

Genesis 10:1 & 6-12

1 These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and 12 Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

- This is the background for the story of the Tower of Babel. Babel was the kingdom started by one of Noah's great-grandson's Nimrod. Remember the problem of sin that initiated the flood.

Genesis 6:5

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- This is still a problem with humans. The Tower of Babel is a product of this problem.

Genesis 11:1-9

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.

This story is significantly more important than its length suggests.

- It presents a unified humanity using all its resources to establish a city that is opposite of what God intended when he created the world.
- The tower is a symbol of human autonomy, and the city builders see themselves as determining and establishing their own destiny without any reference to the Lord.
- The people desire to be sedentary and not nomadic. God desires the opposite, so that the earth would become populated.
- This story explains the root and genealogy of every people group and location all over the world. Egypt, Canaan, and Ninevah are all people in the scriptures above who were present when humanity was scattered.
 - The locations they settled as result were named after them.
 - Similarly other names are listed in chapter 10 that explain much of the ancient beginnings of the nations of the world.

V. 1-4

- The Babel project is all about human independence and self-sufficiency apart from God.
- The builders believe that they have no need of God. Their technology and social unity give them confidence in their own ability.
- Contrary to God's plan that people should fill the earth the building project is designed to prevent the population from being dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

V. 5-9

- With irony, the scripture points out that it was necessary for the Lord to come down in order to see the city and the tower.
- Acknowledging the potential danger of a unified, self-confident humanity, God intervenes by confusing their language so that they cannot understand one another.
- This has the desired effect of dispersing the people throughout the world

Why is The Tower of Babel Important?

Rebellious and prideful mankind wanted to do their own thing, God intervened to stop them, and all the world's diverse languages can be traced back to the fallout from that fateful event.

A World Fallen Into Sin

- After the flood we still see sinful people rejecting God and his purposes for them.
- God told both Adam and Noah to fill be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth.
- The Tower of Babel and its purpose is in direct opposition from the instruction God gave to Noah and Adam.

Racism

- Sin is the root of the differences that divide us and fuel prejudices throughout history.
- We all are of the same race. The result of the genetic separation lead to the physical differences and variation we see in humans.
- However the truth from scripture is that we are all of the same race, the human race, and we all are sinful by nature and in need of Jesus Christ.

Modern-day towers are still being constructed

- Science, technology, theories, and social identities all have parts in them that are used to explain, understand, and work in the world completely apart from God.
- Humanity needs God, not only for eternal life, but also to fulfill our life's purpose. Any depart from God is a result of our sinful nature.
- When we attempt to disobey God's plan or put ourselves in the place of God. It will not work. God's plan will happen whether we build "towers" or not.

There is great power in unity

- With everyone speaking the same language they were able to accomplish great things.
- Their common language meant they could set up and achieve common goals. They were all pulling in the same direction.
- The only problem was the direction they were going was not toward God but away from him.
- However, what could they have accomplished if they had better goals in aspirations? What can we accomplish when we are unified in following and achieving his purposes for our lives?

Discussion Questions

- Have you heard this story before? If not, what is the most fascinated part to you? If you have, what is something new that you learned?
- Is it wrong for people to have confidence in their skills and abilities or to have pride in what they do?
- At what point does confidence and pride become sinful?
- Why is it tempting for people to be prideful or have an overconfidence in their abilities and forget about God? What can we do to resist this temptation?
- In your own words, how does the Tower of Babel story contribute to the start of racism?
- How does this story show that racism is wrong despite our differences?
- What modern day “towers” can you think of? How has science, technology, theories, and social ideas caused people to think they do not need God or they know better than God?
- What does this story say about the role God and his purposes should have in our lives? What cost do we suffer when we think we don’t need God?
- How have you seen people accomplish great things as a result of their unity?
- How have you seen disunity cause problems for people and the things they want to accomplish?
- How important do you think unity is in sharing the gospel?
- What can you do to contribute to that unity?
- What areas of your life do you think or act like you don’t need God?
- What changes do you need to make to increase your dependance on God despite your skills or abilities?