

## Lesson 29

# **Confusion: Dispersion at Babel**

God punished sin by changing the people's language.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

Shortly after the flood, the people again rebelled against God. Instead of spreading out over the earth, they decided to build a city and tower at Babel to make a name for themselves. Because of this disobedience, God scattered the people by confusing the common language and creating new ones so they couldn't understand each other.

## Key Passages

Genesis 11:1, 11:4, 11:7–9

## Memory Verse

John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

## Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

After the Flood was over, Noah and his family—eight people in all—left the Ark. All the tribes and nations on the earth today have come from these eight people. God gave Noah and his family very specific instructions in Genesis 9:1: "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" God repeated this same command again in Genesis 9:7: "And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it." Noah had been commissioned by God to repopulate the earth. Noah and his family obeyed this command; however, the descendants of Noah disobeyed.

While Noah's descendants were dispersing to fill the earth, the people, under the powerful Nimrod (Genesis 10:9–10), stopped at the plain of Shinar to live (Genesis 11:2). There they began to build a city (Genesis 11:4). These people were openly rebellious and disobedient to God. First, they disobeyed God's specific instructions to disperse across the earth (Genesis 9:1, 9:7). Second, they were prideful in their disobedience by coveting a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). They were eager to build a monument whose top reached the heavens. They sought fame for themselves while disobeying the holy God.

This prideful attitude of blatant disobedience angered the Lord—as does all disobedience to Him. He came down to them and confused their language so they would not understand one another's speech (Genesis 11:7). Thus, these wicked people were scattered across the land. There was no longer a common

language but many languages, and the building of the Tower of Babel ceased (Genesis 11:8–9). God’s purpose to fill the earth was accomplished.

## **Historical/Apologetics Background**

Christians are often faced with questions concerning how the world’s history fits with the biblical timeline. An example of this relates to the Tower of Babel. The secular world is continually making archaeological finds that supposedly pre-date the Flood. Be on the lookout for this. It is contradictory to what we know God’s Word tells us.

For example, secular historians date the first civilizations around 8000–10000 BC, with Egyptian civilizations beginning at 3200 BC (along with the Babel-like pyramids). This information is not accurate according to God’s Word. The worldwide Flood that destroyed everything on the earth began in 2348 BC, so none of these civilizations could have existed before then. It was only after the dispersion at Babel that these early civilizations started, as family groups began to spread around the world.

Some skeptics will also try to discount the account of the Tower of Babel by refusing to believe that the ancient people were skilled enough to accomplish such a task. We know from Scripture that this is not so. According to Scripture, the people of antiquity were very intelligent. Genesis gives us insight into these people and what they were capable of. For instance, they were building cities (Genesis 4:17), they were raising and caring for livestock (Genesis 4:20), they were making and playing musical instruments (Genesis 4:21), and they were metalworkers in bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22). They were certainly talented enough (and sinful enough) to build this tower as a tribute to themselves and their own accomplishments—ignoring their Creator God and His instructions.

We see from the Genesis account that the people disobeyed God and built a tower and a city to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). God confused the language, and the people dispersed throughout the earth (Genesis 11:8). This occurred a little more than 100 years after the Flood subsided in the year 2349 BC. Our understanding of history continues to confirm the biblical account of the Tower of Babel.

It is generally agreed that the Tower of Babel was a ziggurat temple-tower. This conclusion is based not on having discovered the Tower of Babel—which has not been found—but on discoveries of very similar “ziggurat” structures in other areas of the Middle East and beyond. The Egyptian pyramids in particular and, much later, the great Mayan temples of Central America are examples of this structure being spread around the globe from Babel.

Historically, we know that these ancient ziggurats were built to offer homage to the false gods of the people who built them. These structures are part of the idolatrous worship of these various people groups. We can connect this to our understanding that the building of the Tower of Babel dishonored the one true God who spared Noah and his family and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1).

Again, looking biblically at this entire account, we see that the dates given for these ziggurat structures are inaccurate. We know, according to Scripture, that the Flood was about 4,400 years ago—and everything on the face of the earth was destroyed. Consequently, all evidences of civilization that we find have to be dated later than the Flood.

As the people dispersed from the plain of Shinar, they recalled their attempt to build the Tower of Babel and make a name for themselves. Thus, because men are wicked and, when left to their own devices will always turn away from God, they once again began to build their cities and temples throughout the earth—the ziggurats that we find today. These structures confirm the truth of God's Word.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.

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