

1.5

WORSHIPING THE ONE TRUE GOD

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will worship the one true God.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God resists the proud.



FOCUS VERSE: Genesis 11:4

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 11:1-9; Proverbs 16:18-19; James 4:6-10

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 11:1-9; Proverbs 16:18-19; James 4:6-10

The biblical location Shinar is known in history as Sumer. While once believed to be a biblical myth, in the late nineteenth century archaeology verified the existence of the great Sumerian civilization. The Sumerians are credited with the invention of the wheel, lever, and pulley; the potter's wheel, sailboat, and plow; the first systems of geometry, trigonometry, and astronomy; the first system of writing; the earliest known codes of law; the first democracy, dictatorships, priesthood, and royalty; the development of the city-state; and the creation of literary, musical, and architectural forms that influenced future civilizations (Genesis 11:2).

Ancient Sumer was a huge marshland with neither sufficient stones for quarrying nor trees for logging. Its cities were made of baked brick. The word translated *slime* in Genesis 11:3 is *asphalt* or *bitumen*. To the immediate north was a region where petroleum hydrocarbons pooled on the surface. The ancient Sumerians discovered many uses for petroleum products including making mortar, paving their roads, and fueling their fires. Some scholars suggest the civilization of the Akkadian successors of the Sumerians fell because of climate change. The previously cool, moist growing season was replaced by an arid climate. Some argue that a volcanic eruption produced these changing weather patterns in the ancient Near Eastern world while others attribute them to the lasting effects of the Flood (Genesis 11:3).

Such towers are known as ziggurats. Babel may mean gate of God, but its connection with *balal*, translated *confound* (i.e., confuse) in Genesis 11:9, suggests the meaning *confusion*.

Such a scattering of the human race would produce a biological founder effect. When a new population is founded by groups isolated from the larger genetic population, the new population loses some of its genetic variation. As a result the two populations may be distinctively different, both genetically and as a result of the environment. Thus, diversity of language groups led to diversity of physical appearance within groups of humanity. Whereas a genetic preference for a type of skin pigmentation may have been individually expressed before Babel, after the scattering it could become the genetic preference for an entire people group, with the frequency of fairly large variation in pigmentation dropping steeply (Genesis 11:8).

Babel is almost certainly the same city as Babylon. Therefore, Babylon would have been the oldest city on earth (Genesis 11:9).

BABEL IS ALMOST CERTAINLY THE SAME CITY AS BABYLON.



DAY 1

Bible Reading Plan

Exodus 37 □ 38 □ 39 □ 40 □ | Matthew 23 □

Genesis 11:1-5

¹ And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

³ And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

⁴ And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Biblical Insight

From the creation of humanity, God commanded them to *replenish* the earth (Genesis 1:28). The Hebrew word translated *replenish* means *fill*. This command was renewed after the flood (Genesis 9:1). It was never God's intention that the spread of humanity would be geographically limited. He made the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18).

Some think God was displeased with the building of the Tower of Babel because the builders thought it would protect them if there were another flood. This speculation is not the case. Their stated purpose was to make a name for themselves and to prevent them from scattering "upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4).

Daily Devotion

In *Voyages of the Pyramid Builders*, Schoch and McNally make an interesting point, "Pyramids carry the same message: All humankind shares a common history, one in which civilization began in a single place and spread across the globe." Throughout history, humans erected massive monuments around the world, and Schoch and McNally see these monuments as compelling evidence of civilization's unity. Pyramids of various sorts appear in the ancient African kingdom of Kush, in ancient Mesopotamia and Sumer (the likely source of the biblical account of the Tower of Babel), in England and Ireland, in India and throughout Southeast Asia, in medieval Cambodia, in ancient China, in the Valley of Mexico, in the ancient Olmec and Mayan realms of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador, along the Mississippi, and Peru's coastal region.

The compelling argument grabs our attention at least. It may also confirm the self-centered thrust when humanity defied God with the Tower of Babel. Rebellion, self-glorification, and false worship unite the remnants of ancient civilizations we see today. But like these ancient ruins, without God, no effort of humankind will ever endure. We must humble ourselves before God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 2

Bible Reading Plan

Leviticus 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ | Matthew 24 ☐

Genesis 11:6–9

⁶ And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

⁹ Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Biblical Insight

The LORD acknowledged that when people unite as one, they can achieve whatever they wish. Since their plan opposed His purpose, the LORD said, “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech” (Genesis 11:7). If they could not communicate, they could not succeed. The plural pronoun *us* does not indicate plurality of persons within God. The Hebrew *Yahweh*, rendered “LORD,” is a singular verb, as is the verb translated “said.” Thus, the plural *us* cannot have the singular “LORD said” as its antecedent. Grammatically, the LORD spoke to someone here, as in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and Isaiah 6:8. Theories differ as to whom God spoke, but one could conclude from the biblical pattern of God involving angels in His work that He spoke to His angels about His plan for Babel.

Daily Devotion

Have you ever tried to communicate with someone who speaks a different language than you? Even soliciting simple instructions can frustrate. Now imagine trying to convey an elaborate architectural building plan without a shared language.

Several have noted the unique parallel to the Tower of Babel found on the Day of Pentecost. “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32–33, NKJV). Instead of confounding people with speech, God united people through the initial sign of the Holy Spirit's infilling. Languages that once divided people now joined people. Where rebellion once divided people, now, repentance could unite.

Many lessons apply, but one poignant principle we learn from Scripture is that anything of significance we do with God and other people will require humility as well as unity. Otherwise, God's opposition and division will make the efforts futile: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Live humbly today.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 3

Bible Reading Plan

Leviticus 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ 10 □ | Matthew 25 □

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Biblical Insight

While no one knows the future in such a way as to predict precise events, wisdom enables a person to see trends and to forecast general developments. For example, when someone is proud, it is certain that one day that person will be destroyed. It is not possible to predict on which day or how the destruction will occur, but the destruction itself is sure. Those who are haughty will eventually fall. The pattern has been repeated throughout human history. How many celebrities, rich people, and famous stars have died with their integrity intact? On the contrary, how many have died in shame, humiliation, despair, or ruin?

Daily Devotion

Possibility fuels the potential for a better future, whereas doubt robs tomorrow of its potential. If you do not believe something is possible, you may find you are correct. But only a prideful heart would attempt to foretell the future without seeking God and the knowledge of His Word. After all, only God knows the future.

James urges us, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. ...Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that'" (James 4:13-15, NJKV).

In humility and hope, we trust in God's will for the future instead of our own. After a season of suffering, it can be challenging to see a brighter future. We tend to believe tomorrow will be just like yesterday. But what does it take for us to hope again? It takes courage to see what God sees. Today, let us reach out to Jesus Christ in hope and embrace the future that he has for us instead of the future we fear.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 4

Bible Reading Plan

Leviticus 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ | Matthew 26 ☐

Proverbs 16:19

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Biblical Insight

We hear of people being “well off” or of someone being “better off” than another. This proverb puts such comparisons in perspective. The humble person who associates with common people is better off than the person who associates with the proud, even if that companionship provides economic profit. The day will come when the superiority of the former position will be evident to all.

Daily Devotion

Celebrity is the contemporary plague of North American culture. Now anyone can be an influencer with a few simple steps:

1. Select your niche.
2. Optimize your social media profiles.
3. Understand your audience.
4. Create and post relevant content.
5. Be regular and consistent.
6. Engage with your audience.
7. Let brands know you're open to collaborations.

Open an account. Build followers. Gain influence. Make money. Satisfy the lust to be known.

The rise of social media influencers and those trying to influence reveal the lust for celebrity. If we're not careful, though, the toxicity of fame can infect expectations in the church as well. What motivates acts of service in your life? Is it the desire to be known? Or is it a desire to hear “well done” from your Master?

The wisdom of Scripture rings as clear today as it did then: “Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:19, NKJV). You may gain followers and money being an influencer. Still, the humble will discover the joy of service in the house of the Father.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 5

Leviticus 14 □ 15 □ 16 □ 17 □ 18 □ 19 □

James 4:6-10

⁶ But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Biblical Insight

God extends grace to those who humble themselves, but He resists the proud. James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 include a quotation from Proverbs 3:34. The greatest hindrance to being useful to God is pride; the greatest aid to being useful to Him is humility. To be humble is to be completely dependent on God; to be proud is to declare independence from Him.

The grace of God is the free, gracious influence of God at work in the believer's life. The classic definition of grace is "the unmerited favor of God." For additional insight on the role of grace in the believer's life see Ephesians 2:8, I Corinthians 15:10, Ephesians 3:7, II Peter 3:18, and Galatians 2:21.

Daily Devotion

The global phenomenon of superhero films has generated billions in revenue. But superheroes are fictional myths. They're not real. Yes, they're fictional, of course, but did you ever notice anything else? Superheroes wear masks. They put on a different identity to be super. Even Superman takes off his glasses to "hide" his identity. One can only be super when one is not his or her true self.

Paul offers a different view. After Christ told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness," Paul said, "I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians 12:9, NKJV). Paul realized hiding his weaknesses was the real weakness. Paul decided to be painfully transparent, to show that "the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7, NJKV).

Authentic Christian living takes the mask off and for transparency before others so they see the grace of God's favor and power shining through an ordinary clay vessel just like them. Superheroes aren't real. Take off the mask and live real today.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

Lesson Title: Worshiping the One True God

Scripture Focus: Genesis 11:4

The Lesson in Context

The apostle Paul said the church would be in front, piloting the way to a new creation, as the old creation groans, waiting for the sons of God (Romans 8:19). He said the examples of the Old Testament were written for the church, “upon whom the ends of the world are come” (I Corinthians 10:11). Notice he did not say the church had come to the ends of the world; rather, the *ends* had come to the church.

But what *ends* was Paul talking about? He was referring to the *eschaton*, or age in which the Holy Ghost rules—the age of peace. In other words, in the eschaton, the enmity between races will end. Wars will cease. There will be a fullness of life and peace. The people will be skilled in the art of goodness and forget the art of war. This age, Paul insisted, is what has come to the church—the future. The church does not have to wait for the future; the future has already come to the church. The reason the church is always out ahead of the world is because the future—through the gifts of the Spirit—literally reaches back into the present and equips the church with power the world will only know in the age to come.

Knowing God has purposed for our end to be glorious, we will choose to live our lives as offerings of praise and worship to the one true God. He alone sits on the throne. He alone is ultimately in control of the affairs of this world.

Group Discussion

1. Why do you think some people get caught up in the pursuit of “making a name” for themselves?
2. In what ways do you see the spirit of Babel alive in our world today?
3. Why is pride often so destructive to the one who is prideful and to others around this person?
4. In what way have you seen pride surface in your own life?
5. Have you ever been warned or become aware of something in prayer before it ever happened? Explain.

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week

How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?
