

God of Our Fathers: Genesis

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Lesson 6: Tower of Babel

Lesson Introduction

- Why would God apparently destroy the unity of humanity by scattering people?
- Why would the Bible portray God as bringing disharmony into a world that apparently was unified and working together for a common goal?

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the Tower of Babel
- Determine if language impedes effective communication

- Identify the sins committed at the Tower of Babel
- Express understanding of who God is

Background for the Scripture

The Tower of Babel is described in Genesis 11:1-9. After the Flood, God commanded humanity to “increase in number and fill the earth” (v. 1). Humanity decided to do the exact opposite. They decided to stay where they were and build a gigantic tower as a symbol of their power, to make a name for themselves (v. 4).

The Babel story has been labeled as an allegorical tale about the separation of languages and people who have already been described in chapter 10 of the book of Genesis. The editors of the *Harper Collins Study Bible* have indicated that, like the Garden of Eden story, this story is a folktale of human pride and folly (Meeks, 1993, p. 18).

Genesis 11:1-9 (KJV)

11 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 thoroughly. 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.

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.

Examining the Scripture

1. What was the reason cited in scripture for why the people wanted to build a tower?

2. How does the writer of this passage depict God? How does this depiction differ from what you have been taught to believe about God?
3. Why did speaking different languages prevent the people from building the city and tower?
4. What sins were committed at the Tower of Babel?

Applying the Scripture

1. How do you think the issue of language confusion exists today?
2. Reflect on the statement: “Even when we try to be united, if the basis of that unity is only ourselves and our own ambitions and goals, we will find that we cannot even communicate adequately.” What modern-day parallels can we discuss based on the writer’s assertion?

Quest to Know God Activity

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?