



The Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9



God cleansed the earth of the wickedness that sin had caused. In His goodness, He vowed never to destroy the earth with water again. God blessed Noah and his family. God instructed them to have many children and fill the earth. This week we will examine the response of Noah's descendants to God's spoken command. Ask God to show you how well you listen to what He has commanded you.

Day #1: God's Command

After the purifying flood, God made a covenant - a serious, binding promise - with Noah and his sons and every living creature. God promised He would never destroy the earth with water again (Genesis 9:8-11). God placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign of the covenant. From that time on, whenever He placed a rainbow in the sky, He would remember His promise to Noah (Genesis 9:12-16). God is still remembering that promise today.

+ *Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." - Genesis 9:1 (NIV)*

How well did Noah's descendants listen to God's two part command? They did increase in number. Genesis Chapter 10 gives us an account of the family lines. It is from Noah and his sons that all of mankind has descended. At that time, all of the people spoke the same language. They moved east together and settled down. Read what they did next.

They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." - Genesis 11:4 (NIV)

They clearly did not want to obey God's command to fill the earth. They wanted to remain together. But people cannot thwart God's plan. He will do what He sets out to do. God confused their language so they could not understand each other, and He scattered them over the face of the whole earth. God's will was still accomplished, but it would have been much easier on the people if they had listened to God and obeyed Him.

***** Delayed obedience or partial obedience is **disobedience**. It is not up to us to pick and choose the part of God's instructions we want to follow. Remember God sees the big picture and works everything together for good. He is worthy of our FULL obedience.

Day #2: All About Us

At first glance, it may not seem like a sin to build a tower, but God always sees the hearts of men. 1 Chronicles 28:9 tells us, "The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts." Let's look at the motive behind the people's plan. Count how many times the men refer to themselves in their plan in Genesis 11:3-4:

They said, "Come, let **us** build for **ourselves** a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let **us** make for **ourselves** a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Now read back through and count how many times they refer to God. Not one time do they mention God. They do not consider His will or His glory, nor do they even ask for His help. They had their own plan. It seemed good to them, and they set out to do it. But what does God say about this attitude?

+ *Don't be wise in your own eyes. Have respect for the Lord and avoid evil. - Proverbs 3:7*

The Bible tells us that the leader of Babylon was Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-10). He was a mighty warrior. His name means "rebellion" or "let us revolt." Rebellion was a major factor in the building of this city and tower. The people wanted to make a name for themselves - to glorify themselves. It had been only three generations since God revealed His incredible power by engulfing the earth with water, and these very people were spared through the line of Noah. Yet the people decided they deserved a name for themselves instead of giving glory to God. God again showed mercy by merely scattering the people instead of punishing them severely.

The Lord blocks the sinful plans of the nations. He keeps them from doing what they want to do. - Psalm 33:10

***** What talents or gifts has God given you? Remember that He is the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17). We should give Him the credit for everything we accomplish, not take credit ourselves.

Day #3: Self-Centered

Genesis 11:5 tells us that God came down to see the city and tower the people were building for themselves.

+ *The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them." - Genesis 11:6 (NIV)*

At first glance, it might seem as though God was threatened by what the people were planning to do, so He decided to stop them before they got too powerful. Nothing could be further from the truth! God is not threatened by man - ever. God is infinitely greater than man in every way. God's very hands stretched out the heavens

Day #3 continued:

(Isaiah 45:12), and with one breath of God, human life began (Genesis 1:7).

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. - Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

God was actually saving the people from themselves by confusing their language and scattering them. The phrase, "They have begun to do this," in Genesis 11:6 means to defile oneself, to pollute, to desecrate. It comes from the root word that means to begin to make oneself sick or weak. Their plan to make a name for themselves was self-destructive. We can never have peace and joy when we are the center of our own life.

Bring back everyone who belongs to Me. I created them to bring glory to Me. I formed them and made them. - Isaiah 43:7

God created each of us for His glory, not our own. That means we were made to know Him, to worship Him, and to praise Him. God created each of the men who built the tower of Babel, and He knew they would not find the peace and joy they were looking for by building a city dedicated to themselves. God, in His wisdom, knew they would only be satisfied when they were seeking to praise and worship Him. It was an act of mercy to scatter them.

* There is no joy apart from God. Have you been focused on *yourself*, trying to make *yourself* happy? While you may find things to make you happy for a short time, you will not have lasting inner joy. But, ironically, if you are willing to turn away from selfish ambitions and focus on God, you will truly find joy. This is a deep abiding joy that will be with you during even the most difficult times.

Day #4: Obedience

This week we have looked at the disobedience and wrong motives of the people of Babylon. Today we will look at what obedience and right motives look like.

God commands His children to obey Him (Leviticus 18:4), and He promises to pour blessings on those who obey His commands (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

Why is obedience so important to God? One reason is that obedience protects us. God knows our future and He wants what is best for us (Jeremiah 29:11). Also, our obedience draws others to God (2 Corinthians 9:13).

Perhaps more than any other reason, God demands obedience because it is an outward show of our faith - faith that God is good, faith that God is all-knowing and all-powerful, and faith that God can be trusted. Romans 1:5 tells us that, "Obedience comes from faith." Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (NIV)

Faith means "to trust or believe." Adam and Eve *did not trust* that God wanted what was best for them, so they did not obey Him. Instead they trusted the serpent, and sin and death entered the world (Romans 5:19). Noah *trusted* that God could and would do what He said, so Noah obeyed God. His obedience saved his own life, the lives of his family, and the entire human race.

If a stranger came up to you and told you to drop everything and come with him, you would not do it. You do not know him, and you do not trust him - and rightly so! But if your parents ran up

Day #4 continued:

to you with a worried look and told you to drop everything and come immediately, you would do it. You know your parents love you. You have faith in their judgement, and you trust that they want what is best for you. You would do what they asked because you trust them. God requires the same from us.



Then they would put their trust in God. They would not forget what He had done. They would obey his commands. - Psalm 78:7



If you have trouble obeying God, more than likely you do not fully trust Him. You cannot trust someone whom you do not know. Spend time in His Word and in prayer, so that your trust will be firmly planted in Him.

Day #5: Multiplication

If someone offered to give you one million dollars, or offered to give you one penny, but would double your money everyday for a month, which would you take? You should take the penny. In 31 days time, you would have well over ten million dollars! That is the principle of multiplying.



Why does God tell Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply? Why does God repeat this command so many times in Scripture? Certainly, it means what it says. God wants His people to produce Godly offspring. But there is another principle at work as well. We who are Christians should be fruitful - multiplying the numbers of believers (1 Timothy 2:3-4)!

What happens if we don't? God is not content to see all His believers huddled together enjoying each other's company while there are people who sit in darkness without His truth. We see in Acts that God allowed the scattering of the believers for just such a reason. The last words Jesus spoke on earth before returning to heaven were recorded in Acts 1:8, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" Jesus commanded His followers to be witnesses - tellers of the truth - throughout the world. Notice what happened in Acts chapter 8:



On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. - Acts 8:1,4

God allowed a great persecution of the believers. He could have stopped those who were hunting down and harming the early Christians, but He allowed it because it caused the believers to be scattered. This was how the early church spread throughout the world, thus fulfilling God's plan.



Consider your own walk. If you are a follower of Christ, are you remaining huddled with other believers at all times? Or are you purposely seeking opportunities to reach people who do not know the truth of God's forgiveness and salvation? If you shared the truth of the Bible with just one friend in one month, then the next month you and that person each told one person, and so on, how many months would it take your whole school to hear the truth? (Hint: 1 x 2, x 2, x 2,...)