

The Tower of Babel

Mankind unites to build a tower to heaven, but God confuses their language and scatters them across the earth.

Genesis 11:1-9

CHARACTERS: God, The people of Babel

THEMES: Pride, Unity for wrong purposes, God's sovereignty, Diversity of nations

AFTER THE FLOOD, Noah's descendants multiplied and spread across the earth. At that time, the whole world had one language.

As people migrated eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 'Come,' they said to each other, 'let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar.

Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'

This was not humble worship but proud rebellion. They wanted to make themselves great, to reach heaven by their own efforts, to stay together when God had commanded them to fill the earth.

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower they were building. 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this,' God said, 'then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.'

Suddenly, workers could not understand one another. One asked for bricks and received strange sounds in reply. Arguments broke out. Confusion reigned. The work stopped.

The Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. It was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.

What man intended as a monument to human greatness became a reminder of human limitations. True unity comes not from opposing God but from submitting to Him. The diversity of languages and nations that resulted would one day be redeemed at Pentecost, when the Spirit enabled people from every nation to hear the gospel in their own tongue.

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