



THE TOWER OF BABEL

Course 3, *The People of Destiny*, Lesson 3

The Problem: The history of humanity is marked by division and discord, beginning with Satan and his demons, cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:4, 9), successfully persuading mankind to rebel against God. Adam's descendants who followed the path of Cain set the stage for widespread rebellion, leading to the catastrophic judgment of the universal Flood. Only Noah and his family, the faithful few who preserved their relationship with the Lord, were spared.

However, even after the Flood, humanity once again divided itself between those serving God and those serving self and Satan. Noah's sons and their descendants reflected this fracture, as loyalties to God gave way to rebellion among the majority. Despite the undeniable reality of the Flood, many chose to doubt God's justice or reject His existence altogether. The choices of humanity set the stage for ongoing conflict between faithfulness and rebellion—a cycle that has shaped the world ever since.

How does God respond to such rebellion? As our Creator, He has every right to expect our love and obedience. His ultimate desire is to rescue humanity from vice, degradation, violence, and disease through a heart-centered relationship with Him. Yet when humanity rejects His love and embraces philosophies fueled by evil, divine intervention becomes necessary—not as an act of arbitrary authority, but as a demonstration of infinite love and fairness to the minority who remain faithful to Him.

God's intervention in the affairs of humanity is a fact of history. From the Flood to the confusion of languages at Babel, these acts reveal His commitment to preserving knowledge of Him and establishing order on earth. As we reflect on the Tower of Babel, we must ask: Does God take note of the rebellion and division in our world today? Will He intervene to deliver those who love Him? And how will He address the ultimate architect of evil and those who align themselves with him?

Objectives:

- I. We shall take note of God's special covenant promise after the Flood.
- II. We shall consider a few facts regarding the migrations of Noah's descendants.
- III. We will study the reasons for the building of the Tower of Babel, and the reasons for the Lord's intervention to frustrate the plans of the builders.
- IV. We consider if there are modern Babel builders who reject God's promises and fight against His purposes, We will examine what the Bible says about His plan to restrain them.
- V. We will ask, how only may we be assured that the Lord will approve our projects and preserve true unity in our communities?

I. GOD'S COVENANT PROMISE AFTER THE FLOOD

After the Flood, God gave special instructions and reassurances to Noah and his family. They had just passed through the most terrible global calamity this world has ever known, and lest they should live the rest of their days in fear, the Lord spoke words of hope and encouragement.

The Word:

1. What was the Lord's response to Noah's animal sacrifices as soon as he came out of the ark? Genesis 8:21-22

2. What very special promise did God make? Genesis 9:8-11
3. What is the perpetual sign of God's promise? Genesis 9:12-17
4. What is the additional meaning of the rainbow for the person who repents of sin and enters into a covenant relationship with God. Isaiah 54:7-10; compare Revelation 4:3; 10:1

Explanation: God did not regret destroying the earth by a flood, as the universal corruption and violence of humanity made this judgment necessary. His promise that there would never again be a worldwide flood reflected His desire that humanity would not repeat the extreme rebellion of the past. Through this reassurance, the Lord sought to free Noah and his descendants from the fear of another such catastrophe, encouraging them to live in trust rather than devoting their lives to self-preservation against a future flood.

The rainbow is an enduring sign of God's promise to keep this covenant. Beyond this, it carries a deeper, spiritual significance: it is a divinely appointed reminder that our sins are forgiven when we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. It affirms that God's covenant promises will be faithfully fulfilled as long as we maintain a relationship with Him.

Relevance: Each time you see a rainbow, it stands as a testament to Christ's profound love and care for you. No matter the struggles you face, if your life is surrendered to Him, you have His constant guidance, protection, and peace. Jesus reassures us with these words: "*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" Matthew 28:20.

II. THE MIGRATIONS OF NOAH'S DESCENDANTS

Since Noah's sons were men of different character, it was inevitable that their families and descendants would develop in different ways and establish themselves in separate parts of the earth. Although we cannot identify all of the places mentioned in the Bible, the general pattern is clear that Japheth, Shem, and Ham were the fathers of three distinct sections of humanity.

The Word

5. In general, what part of the world was first settled by the descendants of Japheth? Genesis 10:5
6. Where did Ham's children establish themselves? Genesis 10:6-12
7. What kind of territory was inhabited by the children of Shem? Genesis 10:30

Explanation: The descendants of Noah's sons—Japheth, Ham, and Shem—settled in different regions following the flood, as described in Genesis 10. Generally, Japheth's descendants occupied territories extending from northern Iran to Greece, forming the foundations of the Indo-European peoples. Over time, they migrated westward toward the Mediterranean. Ham's descendants settled in various regions, including parts of Africa such as Ethiopia, Nubia, and the Sudan, as well as along the western coasts of Arabia and Mesopotamia. Egypt's inhabitants trace their lineage to Ham's son Mizraim, while another segment of Ham's lineage established the land of Canaan, encompassing modern-day Palestine, Lebanon, and parts of Syria. Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, played a key role in founding cities such as Babylon in Mesopotamia, where the events of the Tower of Babel took place.

Shem's descendants, known as the Semites, initially settled in areas like Armenia and later spread to parts of Mesopotamia and eastern Arabia. Shem's lineage is notable for its spiritual fidelity, as they were more inclined to preserve the knowledge of God. From this lineage came Abraham, through whom God established His covenant people.

While this explanation is rooted in Biblical tradition, the migrations and settlements described may not align directly with historical or archaeological evidence. The Biblical genealogies provide a theological framework rather than a detailed historical record, offering insights into humanity's spiritual and cultural divisions following the flood.

Relevance: The division of Noah's descendants reflects an important theme that carries into the Tower of Babel narrative—the contrast between faithfulness to God and rebellion. While Shem's descendants upheld the true worship of God, many of Ham's descendants, such as those in Babylon, turned to self-exaltation and defiance. This tension ultimately culminated in the events at Babel, where human pride and disobedience led to God's intervention. For us today, the story serves as a reminder of the consequences of disregarding God's will and the importance of preserving faith amidst a world often moving away from Him.

III. THE TOWER OF BABEL

As trust in God diminished, humanity's focus shifted toward self-reliance and collective strength. Despite God's promise that a universal flood would never occur again, many doubted His word and sought to safeguard themselves through their own ingenuity. They imagined that by banding together, pooling their abilities, and harnessing their collective power, they could prevent future catastrophes and advance their own ambitions. This mindset laid the foundation for the events surrounding the Tower of Babel—a striking example of humanity's rebellion and misplaced confidence.

The Word:

8. How many languages were in existence from the time of Adam until shortly after the Flood? Genesis 11:1
9. What did the inhabitants of Mesopotamia decide to do? Genesis 11:2-4
10. How did the Lord prevent them from carrying out their intention? Why did He do this? Genesis 11:5-9

Explanation: The land of Shinar (Genesis 11:1) refers to the southern Mesopotamian lowlands, a fertile region well-suited for the ambitious enterprise of the early post-Flood inhabitants. The Sumerians, the earliest known inhabitants of this area, developed a highly advanced civilization. They constructed fine houses, produced tools, household utensils, and jewelry, and pioneered the art of writing on clay tablets using the cuneiform script. Their achievements laid the foundation for one of the earliest urbanized societies.

The plain of Babylonia, rich in clay and asphalt (bitumen), provided the ideal materials for brick-making and mortar, essential for large-scale construction projects. The city they built (Genesis 11:4) is called Babel (Genesis 11:9). The Hebrew verb **balal** means "to confuse," reflecting the narrative of God confounding their language. However, the name Babel may also derive from ancient Babylonian texts, where it is thought to mean "gateway of the gods" or "port of god." Another possibility is that it originates from the Babylonian verb **babalu**, meaning "to scatter" or "to disappear," aligning with the story's theme of dispersion.

While no direct archaeological evidence of the Tower of Babel has been discovered, Mesopotamia is home to the remains of numerous ziggurats—temple towers that date back to early times. It is plausible that the Tower of Babel occupied the site of the ziggurat in Babylon, near the Marduk temple on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River. According to the Greek historian Herodotus and Babylonian cuneiform texts, this ziggurat had seven steps and stood approximately 250 feet high. Today, only the foundation stones and the lowest steps of its stairway remain.

The builders of the Tower of Babel were motivated by a desire to protect themselves from another flood and to "reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4). Their efforts were also driven by civic pride and the ambition to make a name for themselves. God had intended for true religion to serve as the unifying force of society, but the Babel builders replaced this with the worship of human achievement and man-made gods.

Recognizing the danger of unrestrained human ambition and rebellion (Genesis 11:6), God intervened to prevent the builders from consolidating power that could suppress the knowledge of the true God. His solution was simple yet profound: He confounded their language, creating linguistic barriers that halted their construction efforts. Unable to communicate, the people were forced to disperse and establish smaller, less centralized societies.

Relevance: God's omniscience ensures that nothing escapes His notice. The Psalmist writes, *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there"* Psalm 139:7-8. Just as God discerned the intentions of the Babel builders, He knows the thoughts and motives of our hearts today. His ability to intervene in human affairs remains unchanged, reminding us of His sovereignty and justice.

IV. MODERN BABEL BUILDERS

The Bible speaks of people throughout history, and especially in the last days, who reject Christ, and seek fame and fortune in rebellion against His will.

The Word:

11. In what ways can certain philosophies or scientific beliefs, particularly those that contradict Biblical teachings, be a danger to a Christian's faith? Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:20; 1 Corinthians 3:19-20; James 3:15
12. What does the Bible say about false religion as a tower which some are presenting as the way to climb up to heaven? 2 Timothy 3:5-7; Acts 20:29-30; Galatians 1:8
13. What kind of deceptive religion will arise toward the end of time? Revelation 18:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

Explanation: The Bible encourages human thought and reasoning when they align with God's revealed truth. However, it strongly condemns philosophies and religions that contradict the truths God has given us, labeling them as arrogant falsehoods. Scripture is clear that there is only one way to attain salvation and eternal life: through faith in Jesus Christ. See John 10:1; Acts 16:31. Bible prophecy warns of a false religious system in the last days, one that will oppose Biblical truth while masquerading as Christianity. This counterfeit, driven by Satan, seeks to mislead and deceive.

Relevance: To stand firm against the deceptions of modern Babylon and the schemes of falsehood, we must anchor ourselves in the unshakable foundation of Christ Jesus. Only by having our lives firmly rooted in Him can we discern truth from error and avoid the destruction foretold for those who follow the ways of modern Babel builders.

V. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF UNITY AND LOVE IN THE CHURCH AND IN SOCIETY?

Rebellion against God, involving distrust of His promises, rejection of His teachings and lifestyle, and repudiation of His plan for the individual and the church is bound to produce disunity and confusion in the church and society. The only solution is dedication to the all-seeing, all-knowing God who created us.

The Word:

14. According to the Apostle Paul, what is the source of unity? Ephesians 4:1-8
15. To what extent is agreement in the faith a possibility? 1 Corinthians 1:10; compare 2 Corinthians 13:113
Philippians 1:27; 1 Peter 3:8
16. What did Jesus pray would be the experience of His people till the end of time? John 17:21-23.

Explanation: The confusion of language brought by the Lord among the builders of the Tower of Babel was a necessary response to their rebellion against Him. By rejecting true faith, they embraced false and misleading religious and philosophical ideas that threatened the integrity of worship and society. True unity—in both the church and the world—can only be achieved when people turn to the true God and, in a spirit of love, seek to understand and apply His will. When Jesus dwells in human hearts through the Holy Spirit, barriers of language, nationality, and race cannot prevent Christians from extending love and concern to others as fellow children of the heavenly King.

While division and separation were necessary at Babel to restrain evil, God's ultimate plan is for that division to be overcome in Christ. His followers are called to be one in the Spirit, united in faith and doctrine, and working together in evangelistic outreach to share His love and truth with the world.

Relevance: Will you invite Christ to be the unifying power in your life, your home, and your community? With His presence, true harmony and purpose can be achieved in all aspects of life.

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. God said that He was sorry for destroying the earth by a flood.
 - b. After the Flood there quickly developed spiritual division among Noah's descendants.
 - c. The building of the Tower of Babel was basically an act of distrust of God.
 - d. The rainbow symbolizes that never will the Lord allow anyone to build another Tower of Babel.
2. How can the story of the Tower of Babel help us recognize the dangers of pride, misplaced unity, and self-reliance in our own lives today? In what ways can we seek unity and purpose through faith in Christ instead of human ambition?