

## The Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9

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Portions adapted from: "Blind Ambition" by Mitchell Skelton @ SermonCentral.Com. Proofs The Tower Of Babel Account Is True John Gaston @ SermonCentral.Com.

Peter was reading an article out loud to his wife. "Did you know that women use about 30,000 words a day, whereas men only use 15,000 words?"

Victoria replied, "The reason is because a woman has to say everything twice." Peter turned to Victoria and asked, "What?"

Wife : Do you want dinner?

Husband : Sure, what are my choices?

Wife : Yes and no.



That's the topic of today's message – the confusion caused around the world, not just between men and women, by our inability to speak the same language! If we have all descended from Adam and Eve through Noah and family, why are we now speaking over 6,500 different languages. Only recently have scientists begun to admit that all these languages could have evolved from one mother tongue called Proto-World. So why did one language grow into so many, with our resulting inability to communicate with each other? Buried in the prehistory of Genesis is a strange little story about humanity's attempt to build a tower reaching up to the heavens – just ten verses – explaining why afterwards the world developed so many languages.



As to the historic reality of such a tower, the Smithsonian Channel is currently airing a program with both artifacts and historic documentation proving that the **Tower of Babel** actually existed in the ancient city of Babylon (March 6 and April 30 @ 5p.m.). When an archeologist stands there in front of the camera holding up a brick that he had just picked up from the base of the tower and a British museum displays another such brick still partially covered with tar, that is solid proof that the tower of Babel was not just a legend.



But the Smithsonian documentary only goes back to 600BC to a tower named "*The Temple of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth*" that had been built by Nebuchadnezzar II about the time that the last remnants of Judea were being brought as slaves into Babylon (this was the same king who was served by Daniel the prophet). The Smithsonian concludes that the enslaved Jewish population – who in their opinion wrote the 5 books of the Pentateuch during this exile period - then made up their own fictional account of the destruction of this tower that so visually dominated their days of exile.

But in his own writings Nebuchadnezzar recorded that he was actually rebuilding on top of the ruins of an even more ancient tower that had been built “*by a former king (42 ages before) who had not completed its top*” (Gaston, Proofs The Tower Of Babel Account Is True Series, @ Sermon Central.com)

Various other stories of a divinely destroyed tower and the gods confusing human language were also repeated in early Greek writings and in the Gilgamesh Epic along with the Sibylline Oracles. It is doubtful that any of these ancient sources had heard of Moses’ Genesis account; they were independently recounting ancient stories which had been passed down to them (ibid.). So there is fairly solid proof that both an ancient tower of Babel actually existed in pre-historic times and that somehow its building resulted both in the dispersion of humanity and the intentional scrambling of our language.

Thus once again having found archeological verification of this bit of ancient Biblical history buried in the collective consciousness of humanity, now all that remains for us to learn is WHY the building of the Tower of Babel so angered God that He personally saw to its destruction and the dispersion of its builders. So lets begin.

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If you could travel back to the post-flood days not so long after Noah, you would have seen an amazing sight! There at the bottom of the Fertile Crescent, near the Persian Gulf, nestled between the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers you would find a large city in the midst of which stood a partially completed tower buzzing with activity. You might even be impressed with how efficient the work was progressing. Even though the building process was rudimentary by today’s standards this tower in the shape of a ziggurat pyramid had already achieved a great height. The workers each had specific tasks, one group heated tar, another made and baked the bricks, still another transported the bricks to the site while yet another group carefully fitted them in place. Why were they building with clay bricks rather than stone? Because unlike the Egyptians, they did not have any stone quarries nearby from which to cut blocks.

How soon was the building of this city and tower after the days of Noah? No one knows but enough time would have elapsed for the human population to rebound at least in this area. But then rather than spreading out as God had told them to do - which would have kept them as mostly rural farmers and shepherds clustered in small villages – these people chose to form an urban civilization; perhaps the first great postdiluvian city; using the building of the city and tower as a unifying factor to keep all the people together. The founder of this city was a legendary hunter/fighter by the name of **Nimrod**. We know very little about him other than that he was a powerful ruler and that Babylon was to be the capital of his kingdom.

Other than the stories of creation and the flood this was the only other significant event recorded in the prehistory of the Bible. After the story of the Tower of Babel, we are

taken unknown thousands of years ahead until we get to the story of Abram being encouraged by God to go on a walkabout.

**So what motivated these people to build such a structure?** Their dream was to construct a tower taller than any other in existence. This tower would not just loom over the level fields to be seen from miles away, it would touch the clouds; and in their minds even touch heaven.

**But, what purpose did this tower serve?** Was this tower meant to glorify God? Or to direct people's attention upward towards God? Was it built as a vain attempt to physically climb up to heaven? The answer to all these questions is NO.

The real purpose of building this tower is what, in the end, caused its demise. There was nothing wrong with their building method. There was nothing wrong with their plan. Their motives, however, were altogether wrong! Which can be plainly found in their own recorded words of, "*LET US ....*"

<p><b>Let us</b> build a city And a tower with its top in the heavens <b>Let us</b> make a name for ourselves <b>Let us</b> not be scattered over the earth Genesis 11:4</p>
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**Why was this tower being built?** While later similar ziggurats were built to honor the local god -- this tower was being built as an act of defiance against God, and for the glorification and preservation of its own builders.

**How was it an act of defiance?** There is one theory that being located on the flat alluvial planes and between two rivers, these ancient people were used to seeing local floods which would have continually reminded them of the great flood. So this tower could have been meant as a place of refuge should God fail to keep his promise and send another earth devastating flood.

Another reason as they themselves declared would be that this tower would touch the very heavens as a way of demonstrating their independence from God (?), in their own words to "*make a name for themselves.*"

A third reason would be that such a grand project of building both a city and ziggurat would help to keep the people together rather than spreading out as they had been told to do.

So basically their motives were to “stick this tower in the eye of God,” declaring both their independence from God and their own determination of what they would do.



You know the rest of this story. God came down to see what those Babylonians were building. Being amazed at what they could apparently accomplish – not necessarily good things – if they stayed together rather than spreading out as they had been told to do, God decided simply to scramble their language.

No longer able to communicate with each other, they could neither cooperate in finishing the tower or even in running the town. So they abandoned this ancient city and began to spread out founding the various nations, peoples, and languages that now fill our world. Even the very word “Babel,” which originally meant “the gate of God” has now come to mean “confusion.”

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Well that is an interesting story, but what are we supposed to learn from it?

Apparently we humans are prone to blind ambition that often excludes God from the picture; success at all costs. King of the mountain. Top of the heap. “I did it my way.”

In our society, we make heroes out of people who are ambitious. We hold them up as models for our kids and put their pictures on magazine covers. And rightly so. This world would be in sad shape without people who dream of touching the heavens. Ambition is that grit in the soul, which creates disenchantment with the ordinary and dares one to dream.



But left unchecked, uncontrolled by an appropriate sense of dependence, our ambition can become an insatiable addiction to power and prestige and things. Who gets the corner office? Who drives the newest car? Who lives in the most prestigious neighborhoods? It becomes a roaring hunger for achievement that devours people leaving behind only the remnants of relationships.

Some examples of modern nearsighted tower builders are:

The parent who feeds their career with twelve-hour workdays, meetings, and apologies for being gone so much. “*It’s only a matter of time before things will get better.*”

The “tiger mom” or “helicoptering dad” who fulfill their own dreams by driving their children to accomplish levels of athletic, artistic, or academic skills far beyond that of their peers; “*you’ll thank me when you get that full ride in college*”.

The businessman who lies during his business deal and justifies it saying, “*I’ll only need to do it this one time.*”

Anything to gain an edge. Anything to draw attention. Anything to get to the top of the tower. Blind Ambition. Distorted Values.



It all results in rootless lives bouncing around like tumbleweeds through a desert. Abandoned dreams. Crumbling homes. Broken families. Desolate futures. All with one thing in common: a half finished tower that stands as an epitaph and a warning to those who dare follow.

God won't tolerate it. He didn't then and he won't now. He took the "Climb to Heaven Campaign" into his hands. With one sweep he ended their project with confusion sending the workers babbling in all directions.

Are you building any towers? Examine your motives.

Instead you ought to say,  
'If the Lord wishes,  
we will live and do this or that.

James 4:13-15

James the brother of Jesus warns us:

*Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.' Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.'* James 4:13-15

In fact most of James' letter is about humbly living together, with faith in God, and in service to our brothers and sisters. That is basically the lesson we are meant to learn from the Tower of Babel.

But one more interesting thought before we close. Just as He had the power to confuse all human language, God also has the power to un-confuse it.

At Pentecost, now empowered and emboldened with the coming of God's Holy Spirit, and charged to take a message to the entire world of Jesus Christ as savior, the astonished disciples fell out of their hiding place to find everyone able to understand their speech no matter what was their native language. Pentecost was a literal reversal of Babel. Pentecost was proof that whatever God commands, He will equip you to do.

And God has promised also one day in the future, when He restores His kingdom on earth, to restore our common language so that with one heart, mind, and voice, we may serve Him. Through the prophet Zephaniah, God calls to us ...

At that time I will change the speech of the peoples  
to a pure speech, that all of them may call  
on the name of the Lord  
and serve him with one accord.

Zephaniah 3:9-10

Therefore wait for me, says the Lord,  
for the day when I arise as a witness.

For my decision is to gather nations,  
to assemble kingdoms,  
to pour out upon them my indignation,  
all the heat of my anger;  
for in the fire of my passion  
all the earth shall be consumed.

At that time I will change the speech of the peoples  
to a pure speech, that all of them may call  
on the name of the Lord  
and serve him with one accord.

So that day is again coming when we will once again all be united not in defiance against God but in a living loving relationship with Him as we were originally designed to be. It will be a place and time when "righteousness will feel at home."

That's worth praying about an working towards don't you think?