



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

## #34 – The Tower of Babel

### Genesis 11:1-9

#### PICTURES NEEDED

34-1 World Map with Turkey

34-3 Map of the scattering of the people

34-2 Building the Tower of Babel

34-4 Map of early civilizations

#### REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review) What did Noah do after he planted a vineyard? How did Ham respond to his father's condition? What did Shem and Japheth do? Why was Ham cursed by God? Why were Shem and Japheth blessed?
- **The Big Question Review:** What is the result of honoring your parents? Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** Ephesians 6:2-3 Life will go well for children who honor their parents.

<sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—

<sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

## LESSON CONTENT

**Note:** The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

In the last lesson, we saw that all the people on the earth are descended from Noah and his sons. One can't help but wonder if that is true then why are there so many different types of people and languages?

Where had the ark landed? The ark had landed on the mountains of Ararat in what is now eastern Turkey. (picture 34-1)

What had God told Noah and his sons to do? God had told Noah and his sons to fill the earth which meant they needed to spread out over it. Instead of doing this the people moved eastward and settled as a group on the plain of Shinar in Mesopotamia. They were one unified group of people speaking the same language.

What would be the impact of all people speaking the same language? When people speak the same language it is easy for them to communicate. They can share ideas and quickly improve the way in which they do things. The Internet is doing that for us now.

What is the problem in people improving their lives? There is no inherent problem in people improving their lives. The problem is that people can become prideful about what they are able to do and forget about their need for God. When this happens they go their own way and do what pleases themselves rather than what pleases God. They start worshipping themselves, other gods, money or things instead of the one, true creator God.

Why had God sent the flood? Because people were bent on doing evil all the time. The rebellion against God that happened before the flood happened again after the flood. It has been a continual problem throughout human history and it is a problem for our times too. Although God is long-suffering, all men eventually are held accountable for their rebellion against him.

The Bible relates what happened to the people of the earth who were descendants of Noah.

### **Genesis 11:1-9 (picture 34-2)**

*<sup>1</sup>Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. <sup>2</sup>As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.*

*<sup>3</sup>They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup>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."*

*<sup>5</sup>But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." (Note: The use of "us" shows the unity of the trinity of God from the beginning, the same as in Genesis 1:27.)*

*<sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup>That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

What were the people doing by building the tower that displeased God? The people were trying to make a name for themselves and reach God in their own way. They were full of pride about what they were able to do and thought they could control the future.

What did God do to stop them? God couldn't let this prideful, self-sufficiency continue. He had promised not to send another flood, so at that time he just stepped in and scattered them over the earth and confused their language.

What was the result of God confusing their language? The result of God confusing the language of the people was that one family group couldn't communicate with another group and the construction of the city and tower was halted. Each family group was cut off from the others, was moved to a new area and had to start over.

What would each group have carried with them to their new homeland? The people still would have had the technology and understanding that had been developed up to that time. They still lived comparatively long lives and could pass information on in their own group. Complex structures like pyramids and towers are found all over the world from this time period on. People kept building huge structures to reach the gods.

If everyone is descended from Noah's sons, why do people living in different areas of the world have distinct physical characteristics? Because the family groups were isolated from one another and married within their group. That would have caused genetic characteristics such as skin or hair color and facial features became enhanced.

What does the Bible say about different races of people? The Bible doesn't speak of different races of people. There is only one human race that was divided into family and language groups that eventually developed into different ethnic groups or cultures. Stories of the flood were carried on in these cultures. Over 270 accounts of a worldwide flood exist in cultures around the world from Babylon to China to South America.

**(picture 34-2)** What have you learned in school about the rise of civilization? History books relate that civilization sprang up all of a sudden in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East in Sumer and Akkad. Shortly thereafter there were advanced civilizations in Egypt and the Indus Valley and the people spread into China, Europe and even the Americas.

People who don't believe the Bible can't explain where these people of different languages originally came from and how all these complex societies arose about the same time period. The account in Genesis of the Tower of Babel makes sense of history, explaining why different language groups and cultures exist and how they developed around the same time.

What does accepting the Bible as a trustworthy account of history and believing that God is able to and does intervene in human society do for us? Believing that enables us to make sense of things that have happened. People who don't acknowledge God and his hand over all people think that everything has to be explained by natural causes without God. They lack the insight given by God.

What does rejecting God and his truth do to people? Denying the truth of God affects our understanding now just as it did at the time before and after the flood. Psalm 10:4 says, In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

What does that verse mean? Proud people don't seek God. When we think too highly of ourselves and don't seek after God, our understanding will be limited to what we can see or make up on our own. We will miss seeing the larger picture of history, the work of God and the true meaning of life.

## LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** What were the people trying to do after the flood on the plain of Shinar? Why would that displease God? Why did God confuse their language? What else did God do? What was the impact of God confusing their language and scattering the people across the earth?
- **Thought Questions:** Why do people elevate themselves and think of themselves more highly than they ought? Why does this displease God? Why doesn't God put an end to man's evil once and for all?
- **Prayer:** Pray that you would really see God for who he is and yourself for who you are in relationship to him. Pray that you would learn to walk humbly with God and not think too highly of yourself. Thank God that you have a free will and that you can freely choose to follow him and love him for who he is. Thank him that in heaven there will be no more evil and that only those who have given themselves to God will spend eternity with him.
- **The Big Question: What is the problem with pride?**  
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Psalm 10:4** Proud people don't seek after God.

*In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

Questions: Why does pride keep people from seeking after God?

## ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** What did you learn from this lesson? How can you put into practice what you learned?
- ★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.
- ★ **Activity Page:** Word Search  
The names that are used to describe the different groups separated at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 10 are: son, family, tribe, nation, people, land, tongue, language, clan, territory, country, and region.  
Have the students find the words in the word search puzzle.

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++++++T+++++
T+++++ELAND+++
+O++++R++++N+++
++N++R++++A+++
+++GIELPOEPT+++
+++TU+++++I+++
+LO++E+++Y+O++T
NRACOUNTRYLN+++R
YOSN+++++I++I
++IOGC+++++M+B
+++GNUL+++++AE
+++E+AA+++++F
+++++R+GN+++++
++++++E+++++
++++++E+++++
```

★ **This Week's Big Question:** Have the students fill in the blanks for the way the memory verse answers the big question.

Proud people don't seek after God.

★ **Coloring Page:** Color the lesson picture.

- **Craft:** Design a tower  
As a reminder that building the Tower of Babel caused God to confuse the language of the people and scatter them over all the earth, design a tower.  
Materials: copy paper, colored pencils  
Preparation: Run off craft 34 on copy paper  
Instructions: Have the students design and color in a tower on the craft sheet. This can be a competition where the students vote on the most magnificent tower design.
- **Game:** Find your language  
As a reminder that God confused the languages of the people on earth, play find your language.  
Instructions: Pick out greetings to use from the list below (equal to half the number of students in the class). Make two cards for each greeting. Pass out a card to each student and have them practice saying "hello" in that language. Then have the students walk around the room saying their greeting until they find the person who is speaking the same language. The students can switch cards around and play again.

1. **Arabic** - *mArHAbAn* (Hello) pronounced Mar-ha-ban
2. **Chinese** - Mandarin 你好 pronounced *ni hao*)
3. **Congo** - *mambo*
4. **French** - *salut* (informal; silent 't'),
5. **Greek** - *yia sou* (pronounced *yah-soo*; informal)
6. **Hawaiian** - *aloha*
7. **Hebrew** - *shalom* (means "hello", "goodbye" and "peace")
8. **Hindi** - *namaste* (pronounced *na-mus-thei*)
9. **Japanese** - *konnichi wa* (pronounced *ko-nee-chee-wa*; *daytime or afternoon*)
10. **Korean** - *ahn nyeong ha se yo* (formal; pronounced *ahn-yan-ha-say-yo*)
11. **Maori** - *kia ora* (kia o ra)
12. **Punjabi** - *sat sri akal*
13. **Samoan** - *talofa* (formal)
14. **Senegal** - *salamaleikum*
15. **Spanish** - *holà* (pronounced with a silent 'h': *o-la*)
16. **Swahili** - *jambo*

## JOURNAL

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six poetic readings and related Bible verses. It would be beneficial for the teacher to read through and be familiar with its content.