



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.

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

³ "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)

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

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

⁵But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶The 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. ⁷Come, 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.)

⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That 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? Prideful 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:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: After the flood there was only one group of people on the earth and they all spoke the same language.

1. The people move to a place called Shinar and wanted to build a tower to the heavens that honored themselves.
2. God wasn't pleased with the tower and what the people did.
3. God confused the speech of the people so they couldn't understand one another and scattered them over the earth.

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

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★ **Further Understanding:** Investigation/Reasoning Skills

The Scattering of the People (picture 34-3)

On the discussion notes map have the students first color in the areas of the sea so the land is more visible. Read the verses from Genesis 10 and have the students locate each family group on the map. They should highlight or underline the family lines in a different color of marker or pencil. Once they do this they can see how the family of Japheth went westward and populated the area of Europe. The family of Ham populated the area of Canaan, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and the family of Shem spread in the Middle East. (Note: There is discrepancy in maps that depict where each family group settled. This is an exercise to help the students understand what happened after the Tower of Babel and how the people spread out to populate the earth.)

10¹This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

²The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras.

⁶The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.

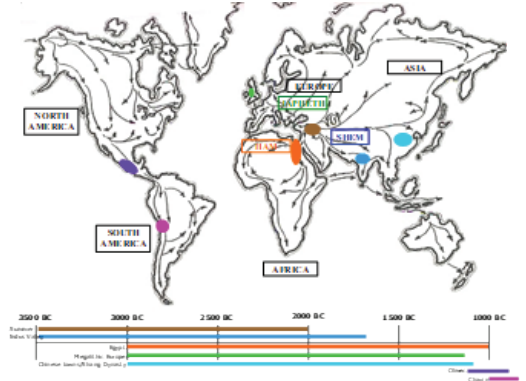
²¹Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber. ²²The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

³²These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.



World Civilizations (picture 34-4)

The earliest civilization recorded is that of Sumer in the Middle East. That is likely the area where the people settled and began to build the Tower. Once God confused their language, they began to spread out and establish cities and civilizations elsewhere. Dating is not an accurate science; different history books give varying dates for civilizations. However, one can get a picture of when civilizations were established and how people spread around the world. Following the map, you can show the students the migration of people through Asia to America. At that time there was a land bridge between Asia and North America that enabled migration to North and South America.



Below are approximate dates for different civilizations, BC-Before Christ BCE Before Common Era (from Kingfisher History Encyclopedia, 1999).

Sumer (Middle East) – 3500 BC-1000 BC

Indus Valley (India) – 3500 BC – 1800 BC

Egypt – 3000 BC – 1000 BC

Megalithic Europe (Stonehenge) – 3000 BC – 1200 BC

Chinese towns/Shang Dynasty (China) – 3000 BC-1100 BC

Olmec (Mesoamerica) – 1200 BC-500 BC

Chavin (Peru, South America) – 1000 BC-300 BC

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six readings that answer a digging deeper question. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Digging Deeper: What happens when people reject God?

Reading 1: Psalm 10 The wicked don't think they're accountable to God. What do the wicked do when they don't think about God? What does it mean to be afflicted and oppressed? What does God do for the afflicted and oppressed? What will happen to the wicked?

Reading 2: Psalm 11 God's soul hates the wicked. Where is God? What does that mean? Who does God observe? What is the outcome of that?

Reading 3: Psalm 12 Wicked men think they are their own master. What happens when there are few godly men? What will God do for those who trust in him?

Reading 4: Psalm 13 The wicked oppress other people. Why was David crying out to God? What did David know he could trust about God?

Reading 5: Psalm 14 The fool is corrupt and doesn't do good. What does the fool say in his heart? What is the fool like? What will God do for those who seek him?

Reading 6: John 3:16-21 People who reject Jesus remain condemned. Why do people reject Jesus? What will be the outcome of their choice?