

TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11:1-32

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Settlers of Shinar

Key-location: A plain in Shinar

Key-repetitions:

- Language/speech (Gen 11:1, 6, 7, 9).
- Tower (Gen 11:4, 5).
- City (Gen 11:4, 5, 8).
- Build/make (Gen 11:3, 4, 5, 8).
- Scatter over the earth (Gen 9:7; 11:4, 8, 9).

Key-attitudes:

- Pride and arrogance of those who built the Tower of Babel.
- God's superiority over mankind.

Initial-situation:

The waters receded after the flood, and the land dried. Noah's family and all the animals left the ark. Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God. God accepted Noah's offering (Gen 8:20-22). God commanded Noah's descendants to multiply and scatter through the whole earth (Gen 9:7). God gave the rainbow as a sign that he would never again destroy the world with a flood (Gen 9:12-17). After the flood, all of the people on earth were descendants of Noah.

The descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth increased. They became clans and the clans became nations. The nations spread out (Gen 10:1-32).

Initial-problem:

All the people spoke the same language, and men on the plain of Shinar decided to build a city in order not to scatter.

Final-situation:

God confused the language spoken by everyone and the people dispersed.

BIBLE STORY

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The descendants of each son increased in number until they became clans. The clans increased in number until they established nations. The nations spread out over the earth after the flood (Gen 10:1-32).

At this time everyone on the earth spoke the same language. Everyone used the same words. As people moved eastward, they came upon a plain in Shinar (Babylonia) and settled there. They said to one another, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used hard-burned brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar (Gen 11:1-3).

Then they said to one another, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens. Let's make ourselves famous, then we will not be scattered over all the earth" (Gen 11:4-5).

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the people were building. The Lord said, "One people, one language; these people are united. This is only the beginning of what they will do. Anything they plan to do will be possible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand one another." That is how God stopped their building the city and scattered them all over the earth. The place was called Babel, which means "confusion", because there the Lord turned their language into "babble." From there, the Lord scattered them all over the whole earth (Gen 11:6-10).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the post-flood generation react to God's command to scatter and populate the whole earth (Gen 9:7)?
2. Why did Noah's descendants begin to build the Tower of Babel?
3. What were some of the admirable objectives that the citizens of Babel had?
4. Why is it that people with admirable objectives, who are disobeying God's commands, experience confusion?
5. Why do so many languages exist?
6. Today, how does disobeying God result in communication problems?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God, the creator, expects man to obey his commands.** God's command was: "Fill the earth" (Gen 1:28) and "multiply, scatter and populate the whole earth" (Gen 9:7).
2. **Man is sinful. He refuses to obey clear commands from God.** God's command was to scatter and populate the whole earth (Gen 9:7). Those who settled on the plain in Shinar decided to build a tower that would reach to the heavens in order not to scatter over the whole earth (Gen 11:4-5).

3. **Those who disobey God's commands will be judged and punished by him.** The builders of the tower refused to obey God by scattering. God intervened, gave different languages to the people, and forced them to scatter (Gen 11:6-7).
4. **Those who have admirable objectives, yet do not obey God, experience confusion.** Those who started building the tower desired unity (Gen 11:4-5); however, they disobeyed God's command to scatter (Gen 9:7) and the result was the confusion of languages (Gen 11:7-8).
5. **Man cannot win when he struggles against God's orders.** God's command was to scatter; the people decided to stay in one location. God took control of the situation and dispersed the people.
6. **God is omniscient.** He knew what the builders of the tower were thinking, what they were doing, and what they were capable of doing (Gen 11:5-6).
7. **Communication problems are the result of sin problems.** Misunderstanding that comes from different languages is the result of people disobeying God when they decided to build a tower (Gen 11:4).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Interaction with Characters in Story:

Invite listeners to interact with characters in the story with a question. What would you like to say:

- To the people who said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens. Let's make ourselves famous, then we will not be scattered over all the earth"?
- To the people who have become confused because they cannot understand what others are saying?