

Stairway to Heaven: The Tower of Babel

By Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

- A. Gen. 11:1-9
 - 1. Learning of the origins of nations and languages
 - 2. Learning about the patriarchs
 - 3. Learning lessons for today

I. THE ACCOUNT

- A. After the flood, Noah and his family begin repopulating the earth.
 - 1. Gen. 9:1, 10:32
 - 2. Some commentators have suggested that the tower of Babel wasn't built until 100 or so years after the flood.
 - 3. Assuming this period of time, six generations could have come and gone and the earth could have been populated with as many as 30,000 people including men, women, and children. It is this group of people that we find in Genesis 11:1.
 - 4. Six generations of people also brought six generations of sin.
 - 5. The majority of the descendants of Noah soon forgot about God's terrible judgment of the earth by the flood.
- B. The Language of the People
 - 1. All of the people spoke the same language and were together in the same place. Commonly believed the language was Hebrew
 - a. The language used to name everything before the flood
 - b. Simple one and two syllable words proto-Hebrew
 - 2. God commanded man to replenish the earth.
 - 3. Had they dispersed like God had intended, they would have naturally developed different languages.
- C. The Place of the Tower of Babel
 - 1. The ark landed on the mountains of Ararat - Gen. 8:4
 - a. Modern day eastern Turkey north of Iraq
 - 2. From here Noah and his family moved to the south and southwest, as Genesis 11:2 says they came from the east.
 - 3. They would be most interested in valleys and plains where crops could easily grow. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are in that area.
- D. The Plans for the Tower of Babel
 - 1. The people purposed to remain together here permanently
 - 2. The area was not abundant in large stones, so they baked bricks and bound them together with natural bitumen or asphalt.
 - 3. They proposed to build a tower for the purpose of making a name for themselves so that they would not be dispersed in the earth.
 - 4. It seems that they thought that if they, as a society, were great enough, that they could undo God's will for the earth.
 - 5. Their plans for the city and for their tower were opposed to God's plan.
- E. God's Punishment for the People

1. It wasn't that God had a problem with their being unified, but with their being unified for the purposes they had in mind.
2. "Nothing...will be impossible for them." They won't be stopped in any of their plans even if they are against the will of God.
3. God had destroyed the world once for the willfulness and sinfulness of men, and He vowed not to flood the earth again. He needed a different solution to man's current willfulness
 - a. Gen. 6:5, 9:15
4. Multiple languages; the language change was a miracle of the mind.
5. The dispersion would naturally result from the multiple languages
 - a. Xenophobia

II. THE LESSONS

- A. Where people gather, the likelihood of sin increases
 1. Rom. 3:23 - Sin is the constant problem of man.
 2. Men must purpose to do God's will - Heb. 13:16
- B. God's will is to be obeyed regardless of circumstances.
 1. We don't know why they didn't initially want to separate.
 2. Perhaps they loved their families.
 3. Perhaps they wanted to be a great people.
 4. Perhaps they wanted the easy life.
 5. They eventually came to want to "make a name" for themselves.
 6. Whatever the reason, God's will was not obeyed.
 7. Heb. 5:9
- C. Pride will always cause us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.
 1. The people together increased a foolhardy kind of confidence
 2. They didn't think that there was anything they couldn't or shouldn't do.
 3. They wanted to make a name for themselves; perhaps they thought that if they did, then God wouldn't separate them.
 4. Pride causes us to behave in ways that we normally would not.
 - a. Rom. 12:3
- D. God's plans will not be stopped.
 1. 1Cor. 1:20-21
- E. No society is so great that it can undo God's will.
 1. Where is Babylon? The Roman Empire? Greece? Persia? Sodom and Gomorrah? The people of Babel? The former Soviet Union?
- F. A society that opposes God is not a society that will exist for long.
 1. Dan. 4:34-35
- G. God's punishments are just.
 1. By changing their languages, the people dispersed; which was what God wanted all along - Gen. 18:25
- H. The people of God came from the tower of Babel.
 1. Gen. 11:14-17 - Eber, from whom the Hebrews descended, lived the longest of anyone born after the flood, perhaps the reward for careful adherence to the ways of God.
 2. Righteous men can exist in wicked environments - Noah, Abraham