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In The Beginning Genesis: Lesson Seven

with Pastor Jacquie

Sunday School

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Why was God upset with the people building the tower of Babel?

The descendants of Noah had migrated from across the Tigris, to a plain in the Middle East: the land of Sennar, or Shinar. Settling in this area, they decided to build a city with a very high tower (probably an ancient “ziggurat”).

The declared purpose of the tower was to reach the heavens, to achieve fame for the people, lest they be scattered abroad into all lands. However, this was in clear contradiction with (possibly an act of rebellion against) God’s command to go out and fill the whole earth. The tower probably was designed as well to worship the stars and the sun, i.e., God’s creations, instead of God himself.

In the biblical text, the phrase “tower of Babel” never appears. Instead, that heading was added later to help readers. The tower’s name was not Babel; rather, Babel was the name of the city in which the tower was built. Babel is derived from the root meaning “to confuse.”

The Tower of Babel was built by the descendants of Noah to prevent the people from scattering. This was done in defiance of God’s commandment. The Tower symbolized their own efforts to settle a land rather than to fill the earth as was God’s command. The people were building a monument to themselves, to call attention to their abilities and achievements, instead of giving glory to God.

Bab-El, or “Gateway to God” became “Confusion” when Nimrod’s technology led only to chaos. The builders of the Tower of Babel thought they could build their way to heaven. This never has been possible and never will be.

Following Jesus is our only hope. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) This is God’s great message to mankind today.

The tower of Babel was all about convenience, and not obedience to the will of God. The people were doing what seemed best for themselves and not what God had commanded. Their building project symbolized the pride and arrogance of humans who were trying to be equal with God. In seeking to be free from reliance on God, the people thought they could reach heaven on their own terms.

APPLICATION QUESTION:

Are there any human-made “stairways to heaven” you are building in your life? Are your accomplishments drawing more attention to yourself than bringing glory to God? If so, stop and reflect. Are your purposes noble? Are your goals in line with God’s will?

QUOTE:

If your life is empty, fill it with Christ.—Woodrow Kroll

PRAYER:

Lord, I pray that I will not be like the people of Babel, thinking that I can live life on my own terms. Help me to live on Your terms, because I know that is the best. Amen.

READ GENESIS CHAPTERS 10 & 11