



Lesson 8

The Tower of Babel

Introduction

In the last lesson we looked at the great flood that covered the earth in Noah's day. We saw how God saved Noah and his family, just eight people in total. When they came out of the ark it was a new beginning and the earth had once again to be filled with people – as God had commanded Adam and Eve in the beginning.

The Descendants of Noah

The Bible tells us about these people and in Genesis 10 we have a long list of names, the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, seventy names in total. Sometimes when we read the Bible we come across lists of names like this which are difficult to read and understand. We need to remember that the whole Bible is inspired by God as the apostle Paul wrote; *'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.'*

Nimrod (10:8-10)

We shall consider just one descendent of Noah in more detail.

"The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan...

Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth (*after the flood*) to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD."

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel,"

Genesis 10:6, 8-12

The names here are difficult to understand, but God gives us them because they have an important message for us.

We have seen that before God destroyed the earth in the Flood:

- Cain built a city and called it after the name of his son (4:17). Now we read that Nimrod also built a city.
- In the time of Noah there were mighty men of old (6:4). Now we read that Nimrod was also a mighty man.
- Just before the flood, the earth was corrupt '*before God*' (6:11 KJV). Now we read that Nimrod was a mighty hunter '*before the Lord*'.

When Noah's family came out of the Ark they were told to have many children and fill the earth (9:1). But we find this did not happen as God commanded, everyone lived in one place and it seems that Nimrod led a rebellion against God for his name, Nimrod, means '*let us rebel*' and he built the city of Babel.

Nothing has changed! Human nature remains the same and people still refuse to accept the one true God and His laws as they did before the Flood.

Building a Tower

We know from the beginning of chapter 11 that all people initially stayed together after the Flood. They all spoke the same language and possibly there were only a few hundred of them. They travelled away from the area where the Ark rested after the Flood and came to the land of Shinar. This is the country which today we call Iraq. It was a fertile land, good for growing food and we can understand why they stopped there.

But look at what they did! They burned bricks and used tar (or bitumen) instead of cement and built a great tower as high as they could make it. We are told of their motive for this.





“Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”
Genesis 11:4

We know who led this great building project! It was called Babel (Gen 11:9) and we have already seen that it was Nimrod who built this (Gen 10:10). They decided to ‘make a name’ for themselves – they wanted to be famous as people who had built a very high tower by their own strength. Perhaps they did this so that if there was another flood in future they would not be drowned! Yet in doing this they rejected the name of the Lord. There is a powerful lesson here for us. It is a natural desire to try and sort out our lives for ourselves. We want security and are willing to spend much time and effort to try and achieve it. But the Bible makes it very clear to us that the only one to trust in for the future is Almighty God and His great promise of salvation. In a lovely echo back to the foolishness of the Tower of Babel, the Psalmist wrote these words.

“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” Psalm 18:2

The Confusion of Tongues (11:7-9)

What did God do? We read that He ‘came down’ (v7)! What a remarkable contrast! Wicked men built a tower as high as they could, right up into the sky, to challenge the Lord. Yet He is so high above all men that He came down to deal with them. However high we try to make ourselves in life, God is always higher and greater than any man.

God was concerned that they would do worse things in future and so He confused their language so that they could not understand each other’s speech. It was the introduction of many languages from which come those spoken in the world today.

The one united family, built by Nimrod to challenge God, now fell apart. Those who spoke the same language would naturally live together whilst others would move away and live separate lives. We saw this in chapter 10, for after listing the sons of each of the three sons of Noah we read this:

“These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.”
Genesis 10:31

So, here in the Bible we have the beginning of all the nations of the earth. All are descended from the three sons of Noah and all came from a time when God broke up the godless society that existed.

There is one other fact to consider. We know when God did this for we are told:

“To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided,”
Genesis 10:25

It was 1656 years from Adam to the Flood – the length of time for the earth to become so wicked that God decided to destroy it. Yet it only took about 200 years after the Flood for the earth to become so wicked again that God intervened to break up that evil society. What a terrible comment on human nature this is.

In the next lesson we shall see how God makes another new start and chooses a man who will be at the centre of all His plans.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned the following key points.

- The whole Bible is inspired by God and all of it is of help to us as we try to learn about the Lord and His ways.
- Nimrod was the leader of a rebellion against God and His ways.
- When men are great and powerful, they tend to turn away from God and trust their own strength. However, we need to trust God in our lives. No-one else is worthy of our faith.

