

Lesson 244 – The Tower of Babel

START WITH A STORY: Language is the “Boundaries of the Lips.”

LESSON THEME: Historic accuracy of the Bible

INTRODUCTION: Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory. His glory is soul-illuminating, information-laden light. **John 1:6-13:** *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Jesus Christ is the **True Light**. He lightens our darkness. **Colossians 1:12-14:** *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”*

Through Christ Jesus, the child of God inherits soul-illuminating, information-laden light. Are you born-again? Do you still sit in darkness? Are you ready to be set free from all your sin and embrace the Lord of Glory? Inherit life-light today.

LESSON: God tells us in **Genesis 11:1-9:** *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of **Shinar**; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had **brick for stone**, and **slime** had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there **confound their language**, that they may not understand one another's speech. So (*in this manner) the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”*

KNOW YOUR GLOSSARY:

Shinar – Country of two rivers. Later known as Babylonia/Chaldea

Slime – (Chemar) – Bitumen, a sticky, black, highly viscous liquid – or – semi-solid form of petroleum. Classified as ‘pitch’, the greeks had a rather interesting word for this stuff: ‘Asphaltos’. Used as a glue and adhesive, it is remarkably WATER PROOF & a great sealant.

Confound – (Baw-lal) – Overflow (specifically w/ oil), To Mix; give temper.

Babel – (Baw-bel) – Confusion (by mixing) – At one time Babylon covered 2,200 acres (3.4sq miles @ 640 acres/mile); pop: 200k! Let's put this in perspective: Cedar Rapids, IA is a pretty bustling place. Pop: 126,326. Area: 70 sq. mi (17 miles wide). Babylon was PACKED and BUSTLING!!! If you recall, Babylon's province, Nineva, required Jonah to travel 3-days journey into the city.

Man says, *"Biblical fairytales like the Tower of Babel and man's once-common language are laughable. To think people actually could believe such accounts is bizarre!"*

The Word of God is a lamp unto our feet. **Psalm 119:105**: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

It's so important that we have proved these Words to be true to our own satisfaction because, as a believer, we will need to act upon them. Every aspect of our life will be directly affected by our faith in God's Word or in the lack thereof. God is a faith God and He can only be accessed and pleased by faith. **Hebrews 11:6**: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

Salvation begins with faith. **Romans 10:9**: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

Eternal life is entered into via the door of faith. **John 11:25-26**: *"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"*

It should be no surprise then to those of childlike faith that the enemy of our soul has a primary focus to oppress and squash the seed of faith that has been dealt to every man. Yes, once again we will prove the inerrancy of the Word of God.

In **Matthew 13:18** Jesus openly warns us that the wicked one (*satan*) comes specifically to snatch away the Word of God sown in the hearts of men, in His famous Parable of the Sower.

Many of God's pronouncements in the Bible **strain credulity**. The natural mind cannot grasp the supernatural nature of the Word of God and easily accepts the skeptics' challenges, but **be advised** that not only are these pronouncements **credible**, but they are fully supported beyond any reasonable doubt. One excellent example that skeptics feel confident challenging is the Bible's account of the **Tower of Babel**. At this place, men, who at that time spoke a common language, rebelled against the commandment of God; it's at Babel that God confounds the common language. **Genesis 11:5-7**: *"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now*

*nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there **confound their language**, that they may not understand one another's speech."*

Before we begin ANY Bible study, I'd just like to throw out two burning questions I have on this subject:

Why, and WHY?!?

- 1.) Why build such a tower in the first place?!? Did they REALLY believe they could REALLY, ACTUALLY reach heaven?
- 2.) Why would 'achieving' this obviously ludicrous goal be viewed as some kind of threat to God?

Answer: After today, I hope that you'll agree with me that the goal of building such a tower was not a threat to God in any way, shape, or form, but rather an attempt of bitter mankind to insulate and protect himself in the very face of God, from any future flood-proof disasters, thus freeing mankind to do as he pleased.

Nowhere does the Bible record that God felt threatened, but only specifically does He comment that 'nothing would restrain them.' Nothing would hold them back.

Instead of learning the great lesson from the flood, they decided they had the power to protect themselves from God, and thus removing the threat of any consequences of their actions...

... and isn't this goal not so far removed from my current generation, which seeks to alleviate the repercussions and consequences of sin, APART from turning to God.

Here is why I say this:

1. TOWER OF BABEL - The Bible records that, until the time of Babel, everybody spoke the same language. In the city of Babel, Nimrod and his followers decided to build a tower to heaven. They wanted to make a name for themselves—an ungodly name. God, seeing that nothing could restrain them from their foolish and wicked endeavor, decided at this place to confound their language. It was there in the city of Babel that God created diversity of languages.

The famed Jewish historian **Josephus**, who wrote shortly after the life of Christ, and who had acquired the Temple library, states in his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, the following:

*"Now the plain in which they first dwelt was called **Shinar**. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth,—that they might not raise seditions among themselves, but might cultivate a great part of the earth, and enjoy its fruits after a plentiful manner: but they were so ill instructed, that they did not obey God;*

Now it was **Nimrod** who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah,—a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny,—seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, **if he should have a mind to drown the world again**; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!

Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of **Nimrod**, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work; and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. **It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water.** When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them divers languages; and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called **Babylon**; because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, Confusion. The Sibyl also makes mention of this tower, and of the confusion of the language, when she says thus:—“When all men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven; but the gods sent storms of wind and overthrew the tower, and gave every one his peculiar language; and for this reason it was that the city was called Babylon.”

It was at **Babel** that the world's **nationalities** began. Because the Italian couldn't understand the Russian, the Russian couldn't understand the German, the German couldn't understand the English, so on and so forth; each group separated according to their languages. (**Note:** that the nationalities mentioned above did not exist as so-named in the days of Nimrod, but are used for example only.)

Again, **Josephus** on the formation of nationalities:

“After this they were dispersed abroad, on account of their languages, and went out by colonies everywhere; and each colony took possession of that land which they light upon, and unto which God led them; so that the whole continent was filled with them, both the inland and maritime countries. There were some also who passed over the sea in ships, and inhabited the

islands; and some of those nations do still retain the denominations which were given them by their first founders;”

This is a statement concerning the common language. It was at **the Tower of Babylon** that God changed man’s speech from one common language to many. **George Smith**, the staff member of the British Museum who translated the **Babylonian account** of the Flood, published the following mind-boggling translation of an ancient fragment found in the excavations. This is what the Babylonians had written:

*“The building of this temple offended the gods. In a night, they threw down what had been built, they scattered them abroad and **made strange their speech**. The progress then impeded.”*

Alfredo Trombetti, in his book titled *The Unity of the Origin of Language*, states that he is able to prove the common origin of all languages. **Max Muehler**, the comparative philologist, declared concerning the common origin of speech, “We have examined all possible forms which language can assume and we now ask, ‘Can we reconcile with these three distinct forms, the **RADICAL**, the **TERMINATIONAL**, **INFLECTIONAL**—the admission of one common origin of human speech? I answer decidedly, ‘yes’.”

*“The admission of one common origin of human speech?” Could it be? The following excerpt is from **J.M. McDowell’s** *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*:*

There is now considerable evidence that the world did indeed have a single language at one time. Sumerian literature alludes to this fact several times. Linguists also find this theory helpful in categorizing languages.”

From **Doctors Morris and Clark**:

*“The origin of human language, and especially of the tremendous diversity of human languages, is as yet quite inexplicable to the evolutionist. There is nothing even remotely comparable to such an ability among the higher animals. That human speech and language are divine creations is by far the most reasonable explanation. Furthermore, the fact that the great variety of languages reflects a divine judgment on early man, as the Bible teaches, is also **the most reasonable explanation we have.**”*

In the book review section of *Discover magazine*, March 2002, is found the following paragraph in review of **M.C. Baker’s** book, *The Atoms of Language: The Mind’s Hidden Rules of Grammar*:

*"Are the world's 6,000 languages fundamentally different from one another, or do they share a common underlying structure? Baker, a cognitive scientist, argues that most, if not all, languages conform to **a common set of rules**. Mapping these rules, says Baker, could produce a periodic table of language, a single framework from which all tongues are derived."*

Otto Jespersen of the University of Copenhagen wrote, "Some scholars see the insufficiency of the usual theories and giving up all attempts at explaining it the natural way fall back on the religious belief that the first language was directly given to the first men by God through a miracle."

One of the world's most visible and dogmatic **Darwinists** has this to say about language, as quoted in the March 2001 issue of Back To Genesis:

"...all the thousands of languages in the world are very complex (some say they are all exactly equally complex, but that sounds too ideologically perfect to be wholly plausible). I am biased towards thinking it was gradual, but it is not quite obvious that it had to be. Some people think it began suddenly, more or less invented by a single genius in a particular place at a particular time.

*Finally, on this subject, modern anthropology knows that the world's population sprang forth from the area of the Near East—from the area of the **Tower of Babel**—from one common mother and father, and yes, from one common God-given language."*

Once again, God's Word is vindicated; for it was from Babel that one common population was scattered around the world when God confounded their language.

2. MORE ON THE TOWER OF BABEL - **Genesis 10:25** reads, "And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided;" Famed historian and minister **Bishop Ussher**, who lived in the 1600s, refers in his 960-page tome, The Annals of the World, to Egyptian historian **Manetho** (who hailed from around 300 BC). This third-party, non-Hebrew historian pegs the **Tower of Babel** five years after the birth of Peleg. **Ussher** dates the event of Babel to have taken place in the 1,762nd year of the history of the earth.

The height and overall design is mentioned by numerous historians, and the descriptions vary greatly. What is obvious, though, is **THAT IT WAS COLOSSAL**.

There is a text written from sometime between 70AD (When Jerusalem fell to Rome) and 300AD that seems to have been likely written by **Baruch ben Neriah** (Believed to be the same Baruch, scribe of

Jeremiah in the Bible) The text has been dubbed “3 Baruch – the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch”. While it is NOT canonized scripture, the fact that it survived in certain Greek manuscripts is still pretty remarkable. It describes the state of Jerusalem after falling to Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. It describes a ‘vision’ in which the writer addresses the question of why God permits good people to suffer, and answers with an afterlife in which sinners are punished and the righteous are rewarded. During the vision, Baruch ‘visits’ various places of eternal life, one of which witnesses the punishment of the builders of the **‘Tower of Strife Against God.’**

*“The Third Apocalypse of Baruch, known only from Greek and Slavonic copies, seems to allude to **the Tower**, and may be consistent with Jewish tradition. In it, Baruch is first taken (in a vision) to see the resting place of the souls of “those who built the **tower of strife against God**, and the Lord banished them.” Next he is shown another place, and there, occupying the form of dogs, Those who gave counsel to build the tower, for they whom thou seest drove forth multitudes of both men and women, to make bricks; among whom, a woman making bricks was not allowed to be released in the hour of child-birth, but brought forth while she was making bricks, and carried her child in her apron, and continued to make bricks. And the Lord appeared to them and confused their speech, when they had built the tower to the height of four hundred and sixty-three cubits. And they took a gimlet, and sought to pierce the heavens, saying, Let us see (whether) the heaven is made of clay, or of brass, or of iron. When God saw this He did not permit them, but smote them with blindness and confusion of speech, and rendered them as thou seest. – (Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, 3:5-8)”*

Answers magazine, a publication of Answers in Genesis, weighed in on this subject in its April-June 2008 issue. The writer lists Babel accounts from various locations on the earth. Three of the nine accounts that were covered in the article follow:

- **Middle East** - Sumerians believed that all people spoke one language, as claimed in the poem “Enmerkar and Lord of Aratta”: In those days...the whole universe, the people in unison,... Enki, the Lord of abundance,... Changed the speech in their mouths, and [brought?] contention into it, Into the speech of man that [until then] had been one.
- **Southeast Asia** - A legend of the Gaikho tribe of Burma (Myanmar) says, “In the days of Pan-dan-man, the people determined to build a pagoda that should reach up to heaven... When the pagoda was half way up to heaven, God came down and confounded the language of the people, so that they could not understand each other. Then the people scattered, and Than-mau-rai, the father of the Gaikho tribe, came west, with eight chiefs, and settled in the valley of the Sitang.”
- **India** - The Mikir tribe in northeastern India tells of the descendants of Ram who grew dissatisfied with earth and aspired to conquer heaven. They began to build a tower. “Higher and higher rose the building, till at last the gods and demons feared lest these giants should become the masters of

heaven, as they already were of earth. So they confounded their speech, and scattered them to the four corners of the world. Hence arose all the various tongues of mankind.”

In the October-December 2015 issue of *Answers* magazine, you'll find the following paragraphs in a multi-page section called “*Digging Past the Doubts*.” Under the heading “**Tower of Babel**:

*“Most scholars write off the **Tower of Babel** account by pronouncing it an “etiology,” a story like other ancient myths used to explain something in the real world. In this case, **Genesis 11:1-9** explains why there are so many language families throughout the earth. When we delve deeper, however, we find that the account is not made up, but rather rooted in solid historical fact. Two ancient clay tablets have been found that record **Mesopotamian** versions of the event.*

*Briefly, the **first** tablet, now in the **British Museum** and very fragmentary, tells of the destruction of a building on a mount in bābel, by a god who “confused or mixed” (bālal, as in **Genesis 11:7, 11:9**) the speech of the builders.*

*The **second** tablet, now in the **Ashmolean Museum** in Oxford, England, contains an intact account of the incident. This version, embedded in a much longer composition called “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,” helps us pinpoint where the event might have occurred.*

It says,

“In those days...[in] the [whole] compass of heaven and earth the people entrusted [to him] could address [the god] Enlil [lord of the air], verily, in but a single tongue. In those days...did Enki...leader of the gods, ...lord of Eridu estrange the tongues in their mouths as many as were put there. The tongues of men which were one.”

In the same feature, beside a picture of fragments of clay tablets, you'll find the following paragraph:

*An **Assyrian** clay tablet found at Nineveh contained an account of the confusion of language at Babel. It speaks of the god Bel destroying walls that had been built and confusing the language of the people at Babel.”*

Its worth also noting that the **British Museum** also contains an cuneiform tablet from Ninevah describing yet another version of the Great Flood. If it were such petty fiction, why was it so widely reported and recorded? Skeptics may howl, but reality confirms a supernatural encounter between God and man at a place called **Babel**.

3. LACKING ANY ALTERNATIVES

Could anything be so frustrating as outright denial of documented history, and even yet, having no sensible alternatives other than:

1. Linguistics tell us that language originated from **emotions** and/or **logical rational thought**.

At almost 5-7k languages in the world, human language offers a wider range of complex structure and expressions than any known system of animal communications. (*You'll not find a sarcastic bird or dog, for example.*)

But when it comes to the ORIGINS of language, often the best mankind can do (*in the face of God's Word*) is to say: "Language is thought to have originated when early hominins started gradually changing their primate communications systems, acquiring the ability to form a theory of other minds and a shared intentionality. (*i.e. a desire to work together became greater than their desire to work apart.*)"

I love how intellectually stimulating it is to basically stand firm in saying, "*Language began when people began to communicate.*" No, REAAAAALLLLLLYYYY?!?!

How do we know? Well, we SPECULATE that, since you can group all modern languages into groups that have similar sentence structure, sounds, grammar, and region, you can slowly trace them back to similar roots to a point, and no further.

But, it is fairly obvious that language is unique to humans, that they are developed, learned, modified, and perpetuated by social interactions (*i.e. people groups that stick together*). Why they all grew apart? Well, its widely held that EVOLUTIONARY MUTATIONS reorganized the brain at some point, causing diversity in sounds, structure, and understanding.

But know this, at the heart of this evolutionary mindset and teaching, if these languages evolved from mutated people, rather than nationalities steaming from people-groups drifting apart, than you will ultimately wind up with Darwin's racist fascism: The ideology that some races, like the blacks, are simply not as evolved as the whites. (*As it stands to reason that one MUST be more evolved than the other?*)

It seems rather comical from the outside to see teachers being dismissed for calling their students 'Germ Bags' and government employees being fired for calling a black first lady an 'ape' when this is EXACTLY what passes for science in public education today!!!!