

Genesis 11:1-9 — The Tower of Babel

The last piece of the prehistory of the people of Israel is an almost humorous episode in which the Lord confounds the humans when they become too self-important.

And the whole world had one language and one vocabulary.

And as the people journeyed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to each other, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly!" And they used brick for stone and bitumen for mortar.

And they said, "Come, let us build a city and a tower, with its summit touching the heavens. So we will make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over the face of the earth."

Then Yahweh came down to look at the city and the tower that the sons of man had built. And Yahweh said, "See, they are one people and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. Henceforth nothing will be impossible for them what they propose to do.

"Come, we will go down and confuse their language there, so that no one understands the language of his neighbor!" And Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they left off building the city.

For this reason one called its name Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole world, and from there Yahweh scattered them over the whole earth.

Introduction — Are the people scattered or united here?

Scene One — Where did the people arrive?

What did they plan to do?

Whom were they relying on?

Scene Two — How must this have looked to the Lord?

Why was the Lord displeased?

What did the Lord plan to do?

What was the result?

Conclusion — Now whom would the people have to rely on?

[This translation is from Claus Westermann's *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p. 533]

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