

THE L.I.F.E. PLAN

# THE TOWER

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BLOCK 1

THEME 9 - BABEL  
LESSON 2 (34 of 216)

## **BLOCK 1**

### **THEME 9: BABEL**

#### **LESSON 2 (34 OF 216): THE TOWER**

**LESSON AIM:** Present the building of the Tower of Babel and the mindset behind it.

**SCRIPTURE:** (Genesis 11:1-9)

#### **Genesis 11:4**

*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.*

The landscape of the earth is speckled with the structures man has built over the years of his inhabiting the earth. These structures stand in both hemispheres of the globe in varying degrees of existence. Some of these structures have stood for thousands of years and are in many ways in their original form. Others are in various stages of decay and ruin. Regardless of the condition of the structure, we are still fascinated by the remains that are here to look at, touch, and explore. From them, we speculate much about the early life of man and about everything associated with it. They project us into the past, giving us an idea of how life was at the time, and clues as to how we got to where we are today.

The ancient world of the Bible contains many of these fading snapshots of man's journey upon the earth. Archeologists have searched for, excavated, explored and analyzed every site they could find from the old world. They have some confidence that they have found the site of the Tower of Babel, and ancient writings which give a detailed description of not only the tower itself, but also of the complex on which it stood.

The circumstances surrounding the Tower of Babel are pivotal to man's history upon the earth, yet the Bible gives only sparse details of the times and of the incident which took place so long ago which continues to have an impact upon all people everywhere. The important thing we gain from the Bible is the knowledge of man's spiritual condition at the time. We have to go to the discoveries of the past to learn more about the Tower itself. In this lesson, we will briefly touch on these two details concerning the Tower of Babel and its aftermath.

When we read the Bible, we have very little to go on concerning the construction and description of the Tower of Babel. We are told that they built a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven. We are given a couple of details about the engineering and construction practices by which the tower was built. They made the tower from burned bricks which they made and held them together using asphalt for mortar. Its top was unto the heavens, possibly meaning that it was meant to be a shrine dedicated to the gods of the heavens which they worshipped. Beyond this, the Bible tells us nothing more about the physical structure of the Tower of Babel.

Much of that which we know about the physical Tower of Babel comes from the nineteenth century English Assyriologist, George Smith. Smith is also accredited with the translation of one of the oldest pieces of literature in history, The Epic of Gilgamesh. Smith's notes are said to contain a detailed description of the Tower of Babel which he found on a stone tablet. They are repeated in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

From the Bible, the picture we may get in our mind of the Tower of Babel might be that of a simple, single, very tall structure out in the dessert someplace, haphazardly constructed and oozing with asphalt. Smith's description lets us know that this was an extensive project of colossal proportions. It is said to have been under construction for some forty eight years before it was abandoned. There was not only a tower, but also a vast temple complex sprawling out and surrounding the Tower which was at its center. The complex was located in the south, near the right bank of the Euphrates River.

On each side of the four sided tower structure, other buildings were erected on the grounds. On the north were two chapels, and one on the south, each dedicated to their chief gods. On the west were two long buildings separated by a large courtyard between them. On the eastern side were sixteen chapels, each one dedicated to a false god. The complex was clearly a concerted and convoluted effort to recognize any god except the true and living God, Jehovah.

The tower itself was massive and built in eight stages. The base covered a square of just over 1,200 feet. The first stage upon the base was a square of 300 feet and arose to a height of 110 feet. Each stage thereafter was of a different size, reaching a total height of 300 feet. At the top was a chapel or shrine which was by itself, 50 feet tall. The tower was ascended by steps which encircled it, requiring seven trips around the tower to reach the top. Half way to the top, seats were provided for rest. Included at the top were a temple to Zeus, an altar upon which large animals were sacrificed, and a very large golden couch where their chief god could come for rest. From Smith's description of the Tower of Babel, we can know that this was not something that was done on a whim. All of this complex of shrines, temples, chapels, altars and so forth, reflect a mindset foreign to the true God of heaven and earth.

To this point, the Bible is clear. In similar fashion to the days before the flood, man's heart had wondered far from God. From the Bible, we see that the spiritual stance man once again had taken was two-fold. First, man had taken a spiritual stance against God. They said, "We do not intend to be scattered upon the face of the earth. We are going to stay right here where we are." Of course, this was in direct opposition to the plan of God for man. God had commissioned the man to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth with others with whom God could enjoy fellowship. Man had come to a point where he had no intention of living on earth according to the will of God. This is a dangerous place in which to be, yet a place still occupied by many people in our day.

Second, man's spiritual stance was for himself. They said, "Let us make a name for ourselves. Forget the name of God. We will exalt man above God." This is the same foolish direction in which Lucifer went in heaven. He wanted to exalt himself above God. This plan failed for Lucifer, yet he still promotes it in any place where he can get a sympathetic ear. The people on the plains of Shinar were about to find out that this was a plan which would fail for them as well. In fact, it will always fail for anyone who attempts it. The only place where such a plan can be conceived is in a heart which has fallen away from God. In reality, it is impossible for anyone to ultimately exalt himself above God. The record shows that all who have been foolish enough to try it have ended in crushing defeat.

There are many great life lessons we can draw from this account in God's Word. Perhaps the greatest lesson is that all those who seek to live in the world apart from God's desire will finally reach the end of this dead-end road. No matter how elaborate we make our stance against God in the world, defeat will always be the outcome. The sensible thing to do is to accept God, and live the life he wants us to live. Nothing else on earth or beyond can possibly be better than living in this way.

## **LESSON OUTLINE**

### **BLOCK 1**

#### **THEME 9: BABEL**

#### **LESSON 2 (34 OF 216): THE TOWER**

The Tower of Babel:

#### **I A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE**

- A. A colossal project
- B. A temple complex
- C. The tower itself

#### **II A SPIRITUAL STANCE**

- A. Against God
- B. For man

#### **SCRIPTURES TO BROADEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1. The Tower of Babel
  - Genesis 10:25
  - Genesis 11:1-9

#### **LINES OF THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION**

- 1. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD
  - The will of God for man upon the earth
- 2. ANTHROPOLOGY
  - Rebellion against God
  - Spiritual Towers of Babel in our life
- 3. THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN
  - The methods of Satan's operation

## **QUESTIONS ANSWER KEY**

1. Who was the founder of Babel?  
Nimrod
2. From what was the Tower of Babel constructed?  
Burned bricks, asphalt
3. Where was the Tower of Babel built?  
Babylon
4. What was the spiritual stance of the heart of man reflected in the building of the Tower of Babel?  
Rebellion against God; exaltation of man
5. How was the Tower of Babel rebellion against God?  
God's command was to fill the earth; they did not intend to be scattered upon the earth
6. How is this mindset reflected in the lives of Christians today?  
By seeking to live life on man's terms rather than on God's terms
7. Have you constructed any Towers of Babel in your own life?  
Student response

**BLOCK 1**

**THEME 9: BABEL**

**LESSON 2 (34 OF 216): THE TOWER**

**QUESTIONS TO INSPIRE THOUGHT**

1. Who was the founder of Babel?
2. From what was the Tower of Babel constructed?
3. Where was the Tower of Babel built?
4. What was the spiritual stance of the heart of man reflected in the building of the Tower of Babel?
5. How was the Tower of Babel rebellion against God?
6. How is this mindset reflected in the lives of Christians today?
7. Have you constructed any Towers of Babel in your own life?