

TALL TOWERS AND TERRIBLE TYRANTS

Presented by

Justin Schumacher

One of the most famous stories in the entire Bible is the account recorded in Genesis 6-8 of the Great Flood that occurred during the days of Noah. After the Flood, God told Noah and his family that they should have more children so that they could repopulate the Earth. Noah's growing family ended up moving eastward from the mountains of Ararat where the ark came to rest. Eventually, Noah's descendants decided to settle in the plains of Shinar, which was an area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that later would become the home of the great Babylonian Empire. Genesis 11 then gives us a strange-but-important piece of information. The text informs us that under the direction of Nimrod, who was Noah's great-grandson, the people decided to build a large city and a huge tower that would reach high into the heavens.

What were the people's reasons for this massive building project? First, they wanted to make a name for themselves so they would be known throughout the ages as the people who built "the great tower to heaven." Second, they wanted to be able to stay together instead of being scattered all over the Earth. Third, because they were full of pride and self-confidence, they wanted to show their self-reliance and independence from God. In fact, Nimrod's name means "rebel." Bible scholars have suggested that Nimrod was a terrible tyrant, and that he may well have been the first dictator the world has ever known. Historical records indicate that Nimrod established an idol-worshipping religion. And, it is possible that such idol worship was one reason why Nimrod wanted to build a great tower that stretched into the heavens.

God knew what the people were doing, and He did not like it. He was angry about the building of the great tower, and He was angry that the people had decided on their own not to scatter all over the Earth as He had commanded them to do. Years later, the prophet Isaiah referred to the fact that God had created the Earth "to be inhabited" (Isaiah 48:18). But the people refused to inhabit it, which made God very angry. Instead of obeying God, the people had developed an arrogant, self-sufficient attitude. They thought more of themselves than they did of the God Who had given them their strength and their knowledge. God knew that eventually they would forget about Him entirely and begin to worship as idols the things they had made.

God was right, of course. As a result of their pride, the people became conceited, arrogant, and haughty. The writer of the book of Proverbs said in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Nimrod and his followers **definitely** were about to experience "destruction" and "a fall."

God decided to put a stop to their work on the tower. Up until this time in history, all people had spoken the same language. While this made it easier for them to work together, in the case of Nimrod and his friends it also made it easier for them to sin together. So, God decided to confuse their language. He

caused them to start speaking many different languages, which meant that they no longer could understand each other. And that, of course, meant that they could not work together either. As a result, the people began to move away from the plains of Shinar in small groups that spoke the same language. Finally, they scattered all over the Earth—just as God had wanted them to do in the first place.

Genesis 11:9 says that the name of the people's great tower became "Babel," because "there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth." To this very day, whenever we hear the name, "Tower of Babel," we remember how the people disobeyed God, how they suffered because of their disobedience, and how their great building project failed because of their stubborn disobedience to God's commands.

You may find it interesting to note that the Tower of Babel was not the only one of its kind built on the plains of Shinar. The Sumerians and the Babylonians also built massive towers, which were known as "ziggurats." These towers were constructed out of huge rocks that formed steps to the tops of the towers so that the people could supposedly "make contact with their gods." And, immense shrines were placed on the tops of the towers for the purpose of idol worship. God, of course, knew that such things would happen—which may well be one of the reasons that He did not want His people to do what they did. But, they disobeyed Him. And look what occurred as a result.

Today, some people in the world speak English. Some speak French. Some speak German. Some speak Spanish. Some speak Swahili. Some speak Dutch. Some speak Russian. Some speak Portuguese. Some speak.... Well, you get the point. What a mess humans made of the world when they chose to disobey God. It kind of makes you wonder, doesn't it—if we have learned anything since the incident at the Tower of Babel?