

## The Book of Genesis

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## The Tower of Babel

- I. Nimrod, the Mighty Hunter (Genesis 10:8-12)
- A. Nimrod was the son of Cush and the grandson of Ham.
  - B. It is stated that Nimrod “began to be a mighty one in the earth.”
    - 1. The word for ‘mighty one’ means “powerful” and can refer to a “warrior,” “leader,” or “tyrant.”
    - 2. The name Nimrod means, “Let us rebel,” “Rebellion,” or “Valiant.”
    - 3. His strength and reputation for prowess will be used to rebel against God.
  - C. Nimrod made a name for himself as a mighty hunter.
    - 1. The phrase “before the LORD” or “before Jehovah” is translated as “against Jehovah” in the Septuagint.
    - 2. There is a similar usage of this phrase in Numbers 16:2.
  - D. The word for ‘hunter’ actually means “to chase, catch, hunt or take.”
    - 1. It is most often translated as venison.
    - 2. It refers to the chase and to that which is caught (food, victuals, etc.).
    - 3. The root from which it comes means “to lie in wait; thus, to catch.”
    - 4. It is figuratively used of chasing, catching, or hunting men (Job 10:16; Psa. 140:11; Prov. 6:26; Jer. 16:16; Lam. 3:52; Eze. 13:18; Mic. 7:2).
  - E. Clearly, Nimrod began as a mighty hunter of animals, but – as he began to enforce his will over others – he became a catcher of men.
    - 1. Remember that Patriarchal Law was in force at that time.
    - 2. God spoke to the heads of families and they were to guide their households in the way of righteousness.
    - 3. Nimrod rejected this order for his own.
    - 4. He, not God nor the head of a house, would be the leader of men.
    - 5. Fausset wrote: “Nimrod subverted the existing patriarchal order of society by setting up a chieftainship based on personal valor and maintained by aggression. The chase is an image of war and a training for it.”
  - F. From this seed, the kingdom of Babylon was begun.
    - 1. From its beginning onward, Babylon has been a symbol of rebellion against God (cf. Rev. 14:8; 17:5; 18).
    - 2. Yet, during the early days of the Christian Age, the Gospel was preached and the church was established in the city of Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13)!
- II. Babel, the Rebellion (Genesis 11:1-4)
- A. The story of the tower of Babel takes place about 100 years after the Flood. {*The population of the earth was probably around 15,000 – 20,000 people.*}
  - B. At this time, only one language was spoken by all people.
  - C. After the Flood, men began to disperse away from Ararat – some travelling southeast to a plain in the land of Shinar.
    - 1. The word for ‘plain’ seems to refer to a broad plain, like the floodplain of a river.
    - 2. It refers to the plain of the Euphrates River in the land that would become known as Mesopotamia.

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- D. The people decided to build a city and a tower that would endure.
    - 1. The bricks they used were burned thoroughly.
    - 2. Usually, bricks were made of clay that was dried in the sun.
    - 3. By burning this material, the bricks became resilient like stone.
    - 4. To join them together, they used a mortar of asphalt (found abundantly in this region, and still seen in ancient ruins).
  - E. Their motive in doing this was rebellion against God.
    - 1. Remember the influence of Nimrod.
    - 2. God was to rule over man through the heads of families.
    - 3. They wanted a tower to be seen of men and to make a name for themselves.
    - 4. The goal was to keep them united and from being dispersed throughout the world.
    - 5. Yet, God had commanded them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish (fill) the earth.”
    - 6. He had promised that He would never flood the world with water again, ensuring that they could spread abroad and settle the earth.
    - 7. But, they wanted a tower that reached into the sky for protection and pride.
  - F. The tower of Babel is a tower of rebellion and idolatry.
- III. Babel, the Confusion (Genesis 11:5-9)
- A. The actions of God are described in human terms but should be understood in a way that limits the omniscience or omnipotence of Jehovah.
  - B. These verses describe the judicial actions of God – He inspected, He judged, and He punished.
  - C. Do not overlook the powerful statement on unity found in verse 6.
    - 1. Unity in evil is strong but can be defeated by God.
    - 2. Unity in truth is mighty and will never be defeated, for God is present.
  - D. To disrupt their unity in sin, God confounded their language so they could not understand one another.
  - E. As a result, they ceased working on the city and were dispersed throughout the world.
    - 1. Note that God’s purpose was accomplished in spite of man’s rebellion.
    - 2. Had man obeyed, God’s will would have been achieved and man would have been blessed.
    - 3. Instead, God’s will was done, but man was made to suffer because of his sins.
  - F. The name Babel means “confusion.”