



# Confusion: Dispersion at Babel

# 6

## Key Themes

- God judges sin.
- God is omniscient.

## Key Passages

- Genesis 9:1, 9:7, 11:1–9

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the sin that caused God to judge mankind by changing the people's language.
- Explain how the confusion of languages scattered people over the whole world.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

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Students will decipher a "Backward Message" relating to the lesson.



### Studying God's Word

page 5

Shortly after the Flood, the people again rebelled against God, and instead of spreading out over the earth they decided to build a city and tower to make a name for themselves at Babel. Because of this disobedience, God scattered the people by confusing the language they spoke so they couldn't understand each other.



### Activity 1: Babel Video Clip

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Students will watch the Babel video clip from the Resource DVD-ROM.



### Activity 2: Language Fun

page 11

Students will search out other students who speak their same language by matching their language cards.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### COME ON IN

- Print one Backward Message worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Backward Message worksheet for each student



### STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print the four Lesson Images from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Four Lesson Images



### BABEL VIDEO CLIP

- Preview the Babel video clip (2:28) from the Resource DVD-ROM before showing it in class.

- Babel video clip from the Resource DVD-ROM
- TV and DVD player or computer



### LANGUAGE FUN

- Print at least two copies of the Hello Match activity sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM and cut out the cards. Students will form "language groups" according to the cards you pass out so you will want at least two of each card.

- Hello cards



## Memory Verse

**Acts 17:26–27** And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this lesson, read Genesis 9:1, 9:7, 11:1–9; Acts 17:26–27.

After the Flood was over, Noah and his family—eight people in all—left the Ark. All the tribes and nations on the earth today have come from these eight people. God gave Noah and his family very specific instructions in Genesis 9:1: “So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’” God repeated this same command again in Genesis 9:7: “As for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.” Noah had been commissioned by God to repopulate the earth. Noah and his family obeyed this command; however, the descendants of Noah disobeyed.

While Noah’s descendants were dispersing to fill the earth, the people, under the powerful Nimrod (Genesis 10:9–10), stopped at the plain of Shinar to live (Genesis 11:2). There they began to build a city (Genesis 11:4). These people were openly rebellious and disobedient to God. First, they disobeyed God’s specific instructions to disperse across the earth (Genesis 9:1, 9:7). Second, they were prideful in their disobedience by coveting a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). They were anxious to build a monument to themselves whose top is in the heavens, looking to gain fame in the land among the people while disobeying the holy God.

This prideful attitude of blatant disobedience angered the Lord—as does all disobedience to Him. He came down to them and confused their language so they would not understand one another’s speech (Genesis 11:7). Thus, these wicked people were scattered across the land, there was no longer a common language, and the building of the Tower of Babel ceased (Genesis 11:8–9). God’s purpose to fill the earth was accomplished.

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Christians are often faced with questions concerning how the world’s history fits in with the biblical timeline. An example of this relates to the Tower of Babel. The secular world is continually making archaeological finds that supposedly pre-date the Flood. Be on the lookout for this. It is contradictory to what we know God’s Word tells us.

For example, secular historians date the first civilizations around 8000–10000 BC, with Egyptian civilizations beginning at 3200 BC (along with the Babel-

like pyramids). This information is not accurate according to God’s Word. The worldwide Flood that destroyed everything on the earth began in 2348 BC, so none of these civilizations could have existed before then. It was only after the dispersion at Babel that these early civilizations started, as family groups began to spread around the world.

Some skeptics will also try to discount the account of the Tower of Babel by refusing to believe that the ancient people were skilled enough to accomplish such a task. We know from Scripture that this is not so. According to God’s Word, the people of antiquity were very intelligent. Genesis gives us insight into these people and what they were capable of. For instance, they were building cities (Genesis 4:17), they were raising and caring for livestock (Genesis 4:20), they made and played musical instruments (Genesis 4:21), and they were metalworkers in bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22). They were certainly talented enough (and sinful enough) to build this tower as a tribute to themselves and their own accomplishments—ignoring their Creator God and His instructions.

Be aware that information like the above is just what children, parents, teachers, and all of us see and hear from the world—and it contradicts the Bible. It confuses and denies the infallibility of God’s Word. We must continue to rely on the biblical worldview we know to be true.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We see from the Genesis account that the people disobeyed God and built a tower and a city to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). God confused the language and the people dispersed throughout the earth (Genesis 11:8). This occurred a little more than 100 years after the Flood subsided in the year 2349 BC. Our understanding of history continues to confirm the biblical account of the Tower of Babel.

It is generally agreed that the Tower of Babel was a ziggurat temple-tower. This conclusion is based not on having discovered the Tower of Babel—which has not been found—but on discoveries of very similar “ziggurat” structures in other areas of the Middle East and beyond. The Egyptian pyramids in particular and, much later, the great Mayan temples of Central America are examples of this structure being spread around the globe from Babel.

Historically, we know that these ancient ziggurats were built to offer homage to the false gods of the

people who built them. These structures are part of the idolatrous worship of these various people groups. We can connect this to our understanding that the building of the Tower of Babel was dishonoring of the one true God who spared Noah and his family and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1).

Again, looking biblically at this entire account, we see that the dates given for these archaeological finds are inaccurate. We know, according to Scripture, that the Flood was about 4,300 years ago—and everything on the face of the earth was destroyed. Consequently, all evidences of civilization that we find have to be dated later than the Flood.

As the people dispersed from the plain of Shinar, they recalled their attempt to build the Tower of Babel and make a name for themselves. Thus, because men are wicked and, when left to their own devices will always turn from God, they once again began to build their cities and temples throughout the earth—the ziggurats that we find today.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## **BEFORE THE THRONE**

Lord, I know that through one man, Adam, all men sin. And I know that my sin demands punishment because you are holy and just. Thank you, dear Lord, for your longsuffering and mercy, and thank you for providing the ultimate cure for sin—the death of your Son Jesus on the Cross. How amazed I am at your grace, that through faith you have revealed the truth of the gospel to me. And I beg you, Lord, to have mercy on the children in my class who don't know you. Help them to acknowledge their sinfulness and need for the Savior. Help me to be a clear and encouraging witness to each one.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Distribute the Backward Message worksheets for students to decipher.

To make it more exciting and engaging for the class, you may want to have your students compete by setting up teams—with girls against boys, blondes against brunettes, etc. Time them to see who can figure the message out first.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



## REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme posters from previous weeks, quickly review the lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the students questions about the previous lessons as you review the Lesson Theme posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



## Studying God's Word

We are going to look at another one of the Seven C's of History today. Can anyone tell me which one comes after Catastrophe? *Confusion. Refer to the Seven C's Timeline.*

- ? Who can find the Tower of Babel on our Seven C's Timeline? Who can tell me when it happened? *Have a volunteer come up to the Seven C's Timeline to get a closer look. About 100 years after the Flood.*

### READ THE WORD

We're going to pick up today right after Noah and his family, and all the animals got off the Ark. We are going to read Genesis 9:1 and 9:7. I want you to listen carefully and we will answer some questions about all of these verses. *Assign the verses to be read. Have the students follow along in their Bibles.*

Genesis 9:1, 9:7

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

- ? After the Flood, what did God tell Noah and his family to do? *Genesis 9:1 and 9:7. Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*
- ? What does be fruitful and multiply mean? *Allow for answers. To have lots of children.*
- ? What does fill the earth mean? *Allow for answers. To spread out and inhabit the whole world.*

Exactly. God was commanding them to have children and to spread out and fill the earth with people. That sounds like a simple plan, but did they obey? Let's find out.

Turn to Genesis 11. This occurred about a hundred years after the Flood. Noah and his family obeyed God and began to have more children. That's good. But did their descendants spread out and fill the earth? We'll see.

- ? What does Genesis 11:1 say about the whole earth? *They had one language and one speech.*
- ? What happened in the land of Shinar? *Genesis 11:2. They dwelt there.*
- ? And what does Genesis 11:3–4 say? Read it and tell me in your own words. *They started to build a city. They wanted to make a name for themselves. They didn't want to be scattered abroad over the earth.*

That's right. The Bible says that they were settling there. The end of Genesis 11:4 says that they began building a city and a tower "lest they be scattered." They didn't want to be scattered.

- ? Now remember what God command them to do? *Genesis 9:1. Fill the earth.*
- ? So what part of God's plan were they disobeying? *They weren't filling the earth. They stopped and settled in one place.*

And remember what we read in Genesis 11:1. They all spoke the same language. Everyone in the whole world could communicate with each other without needing a translator. Wouldn't that be amazing?

- ? Look back at Genesis 11:4. Why did they want to build a city and a tower? *They did not want to be scattered. They wanted to make a name for themselves.*

### Discover the Truth

Let me recap what we've learned so far. First we read that God commanded Noah and his family to multiply and fill the earth. God wanted the whole earth to be filled with people.

- ? One hundred years later, what did we find out about Noah's descendants? Were they staying together or filling the earth? *Staying together.*
- ? And what were they making? *Bricks.*
- ? Why? *To build a city and a tower.*
- ? And they all spoke one what? *Language.*
- ? Good. You're getting the picture. What was the problem with these people, the descendants of Noah? *Encourage answers.*

Look closely at verse 4. It says, "let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered." That is a group of people that are so prideful and rebellious against God that they don't even try to hide it. They were openly boasting that they were disobeying God's command to scatter.

These people wanted to gain fame in the land among the people while openly disobeying the holy God. They were very prideful and rebellious, weren't they?

And they were disobeying God's specific instructions to spread out and fill the earth. They wanted to do their own thing! They were filled with rebellion and pride towards our holy God!

? Rebellion and pride are dangerous things. Yet we all have to admit we are rebellious and prideful ourselves. Don't we? Have you ever chosen to do your own thing instead of doing what God asks of you? *Yes.*

For example, have you ever told a lie to get out of trouble? You knew that telling a lie was wrong, but you did it anyway to avoid punishment. That is rebellion against God. It is prideful. We know that God says do not lie. You may have said to yourself that you could lie this once in order to get out of trouble. Every time you do that, you are acting like you think you know better than God.

Or have you ever disobeyed your parents when they asked you to do something? You may have pretended not to hear them because you were busy doing something else.

? Have you ever done that? *Yes.*

That is rebellion against God. When you behave like this, you are choosing your way over God's. When you do that, you are being rebellious and prideful just like the descendants of Noah in the plains of Shinar.



## READ THE WORD

Let's keep reading to see what God has to say about the pride and sin of the people as they built the tower and the city. Let's read Genesis 11:5-9.

*Choose a volunteer to read the passage.*

Genesis 11:5-9

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

? **Why did the Lord come down?** *Genesis 11:5. To see the tower and the city that the people had begun to build.*

? **What does Genesis 11:6 tell us about the people?** *They are all one. They have one language. They can do anything.*

? **Does that seem like a problem to you? Why?** *Allow answers.*

At first glance, this seems a little confusing. Usually we think it's a good thing when there is unity and when people are able to accomplish great things. But God sees things differently than man sees them. God saw that they were relying on their own intelligence and skills instead of trusting and obeying

SOVEREIGN  
JUST  
HOLY  
OMNISCIENT  
OMNIPOTENT  
*(Refer to Attributes poster)*

Him. They were doing things their own way instead of God's way. They were actually ignoring God's command to scatter throughout the earth.

- ? What did God do to the people? *Genesis 11:7. He confused their language.*
- ? Yes, He did. And what was the result? *Genesis 11:7. They couldn't understand each other, so they stopped building and scattered.*
- ? According to verse 9, what was that unfinished city called and why? *It was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.*
- ? Look in Genesis 11:8 and 9. What word is repeated? *Scattered.*
- ? Hmm. And what was God's purpose? What did God want the people to do? *Genesis 9:1. Fill the whole earth.*

So God's purpose was fulfilled wasn't it? The people on the earth were being rebellious and prideful. So God punished their sin by confusing their language. Because they couldn't understand each other, the people were forced to scatter and fulfill God's original command.

Which attributes of God do you see displayed in this passage? *Allow students to consider this while looking at the Attributes of God poster. Help them if they have trouble coming up with some of these: sovereign, just, holy, omniscient, omnipotent.*

### Discover the Truth

Let's think about what we've just read. In the past, we've seen God's judgment executed on the earth because of sin. But this is a different kind of judgment. God confused the language of the people.

- ? Do you know why confusing the language of the people would have caused them to scatter? *Allow for answers.*

Let me give you an illustration to help you understand this better. Imagine you are working on a construction site. Everyone has a different job. Some are brick makers, others gather things to make the brick, some arrange for the hauling of the dried brick, others design the towers and buildings, some inspect the buildings, making sure the walls are sturdy and straight. There are some who are the brick layers, others who make mortar, people who are experts in window design, others who make clothes for the builders, some who make the food and supply water for the builders, farmers who grow the food for the workers to eat, doctors who stitch up cuts and splint broken bones, and on and on.

- ? Do you see how many different skills would be needed to build a city and a tower? *Yes.*

What would happen if all of a sudden, in the middle of their work, the brick layer yelled down to the mortar maker, "More mortar, please." And the mortar maker looked up and said, "Was?" (pronounced vas). "Was" is the word "what" in German. The work of the city and the tower



would come to a complete standstill if the people stopped being able to understand each other. And that's what happened.

Immediately, after God confused their language, the people at Babel stopped working and tried to find all the other people who spoke their same language. Then family groups who spoke the same language packed up their things and left. Some went north, others south, some east, and a few traveled west. They scattered to different parts of the world where they settled. That's why people in different parts of the world speak different languages. The world went from one language to many. Their new language was the starting point for their civilization. I want to show you what that looks like today.

*Using the World Map Image sheet, a world map, or a globe, point to these countries as you ask the questions. Start by pointing to Iraq. This is where the descendants of Noah were starting to build the city and the tower of Babel, united with one language. Drag your finger east, over to China.*

- ? This is China. What language do they speak in China? *Chinese. Point to the country of Portugal next.*
- ? What language do they speak in Portugal? *Portuguese. Point to the country of Spain next.*
- ? What language do they speak in Spain? *Spanish. Point to Russia next.*
- ? What language do they speak in Russia? *Russian. Point to India next.*
- ? What language do they speak in India? *Hindi. Point to Germany next.*
- ? What about the people in Germany. What language do they speak? *German. Next, point to Mexico.*
- ? What about the people in Mexico? *They speak Spanish. Next, point to Canada.*
- ? What about in Canada? What language do they speak? *They speak both English and French. Point to Saudi Arabia.*
- ? What about the people in Saudi Arabia? *Arabic. Next, point to Israel.*
- ? Does anyone know what language they speak in Israel? *Hebrew. Point back to the country of Iraq.*

And right here in the plains of Shinar is where it all happened. God confused the language of the people so they would scatter and fill the earth.

- ? Did God's plan work? *Yes, it did!*

The people filled the earth and formed different civilizations. Each family group was different with different physical traits and different skills and abilities and even different ideas about how things should be done. So each civilization was different.

It's interesting to notice how many of the families took the idea of tower building with them when they scattered.

- ? Did you know that many ancient civilizations around the world had towers similar to the Tower of Babel? *Yes/no.*

Near the location of the original Tower of Babel, archeologists have discovered a tower. This kind of tower is called a "ziggurat." *Show students the Ziggurat Image sheet.*

Scholars who have studied the Bible and archaeology have traditionally thought that the Tower of Babel probably looked similar to these.

- ? Pyramids are found in Egypt, aren't they? *Yes.*

*Use the World Map With Ziggurat Images sheet, a globe, or a world map to point out the locations of tower structures around the world.* A pyramid is a tower too, but a different design. Towers like ziggurats and pyramids are found all over the world—in Mexico, Central America, Peru, China, and even the United States. Earthen mounds that resemble ziggurats and pyramids were built by Native Americans long ago. The history of when or how they were built is a mystery. But one thing seems obvious. When God confused the people's language and they dispersed, many of the families took with them the desire and know-how to build towers. They likely passed that information down to their children and their grandchildren. That's why towers like these have been found all over the world.

One hundred years after the Flood, the inhabitants of earth were going their own way, disobeying God's command to fill the earth. They were living in rebellion, building a city and a tower to make a name for themselves. So God confused their language, causing them to scatter.

- ? Will God accomplish His purpose, even when man doesn't obey? *Yes, He will.*

And He did. Today there are thousands of different languages all over the world, all because God confused the languages at Babel. And we see towering structures all over the world built by ancient people who took the tower-building knowledge with them when they scattered across the world from the plain in the land of Shinar.

The account of the fourth C, Confusion, should teach us one very important lesson. When God gives us a command, we should obey. God is not pleased when we do things our own way. That's rebellion and pride. God judged the people of Babel, and He will one day judge us for our sins. The good news is that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to take the punishment we deserve. And if we repent and trust Him, we will be able to face judgment day forgiven and saved from the punishment we deserve.





## Babel Video Clip

### MATERIALS

- Babel video clip (2:28) from the Resource DVD-ROM
- TV and DVD player or computer

### INSTRUCTIONS

We are going to watch a short video now. It's about Babel, the people there, what they did, and how God dealt with them. Watch closely. You will hear a lot of what we just spoke about. *Play the video clip from the Resource DVD-ROM.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Noah's descendants had become rebellious and prideful. They were only interested in

doing things their own way. They should have been doing things God's way. God had commanded them to scatter and fill the earth, but they refused and decided to build a city and a tower and make a name for themselves right where they were. So God judged them. He confused their language. They had to stop their building and scatter. The world still has many different languages and civilizations as a result of God's judgment at the Tower of Babel.



## Language Fun

### MATERIALS

- Hello cards (at least two of each language)

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Prepare your cards ahead of class. Depending on the size of your class, make sets of cards so that each language group will have at least two people in it. Before you begin, pronounce the various translations of the word "hello" from the cards.*

*To begin this activity, ask the students to stand in the middle of the room. Give each student one of the cards with "hello" written on it in a different language. The idea is to let them experience what it would have been like to go from one language to many languages.*

This activity will give us a small idea of what the people who were building the Tower of Babel felt like when God confused their language. Right now you all speak one language. But when I say start,

start saying, "Hello" in your new language. You need to find everyone who speaks your language and get together. The activity is over when everyone has found his or her group. *Begin activity.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Great job. You know, it's nearly impossible to work and live together when you can't communicate. God judged these people for their disobedience by confusing their language. They had refused to go out and settle throughout the world. But God knew just what to do to accomplish His will. He judged their sin by confusing their language. The people stopped building and scattered over the face of the earth.





# Applying God's Word

## WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

About one hundred years after the Flood, Noah's descendants had multiplied. They obeyed the first part of God's command, but not the second part—they hadn't filled the earth. Instead, they stopped to build a tower and a city and to make a name for themselves.

? **What was their sin?** *They refused to obey God. They settled and built a city instead of scattering like God told them. They were being rebellious and prideful.*

God's judgment for their disobedience and pride was to confuse their language. Because they could no longer talk to each other, they gathered their families and moved to different parts of the world where they developed different cultures and civilizations. So, in spite of their disobedience, God's purpose was fulfilled, and the earth was settled.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Today, people still speak different languages all around the world. And cultures are different in different countries. Those differences can be traced back to the time when God confused the languages, and the people were scattered around the world.

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners. We all struggle with rebellion and pride just like Noah's descendants did. God must judge our sin just like He has judged the sins in the past. But God in His mercy has provided a way for us to avoid His anger. Jesus died on the Cross for sins. And all who turn from their sin and are truly sorry, and trust in Jesus, will be forgiven because He shed His blood for us. He helps us to obey Him better too, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that's really good news!



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



### MEMORY VERSE

**Acts 17:26–27** And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His perfect Word.
- Ask forgiveness for our sins. Acknowledge that God must punish sin like He did at Babel.
- Thank God that He provided Jesus Christ to take the punishment and judgment for the sins of everyone who will believe in Him.