

THE BABEL GENERATION

Genesis 11:1-9

The word “*Babel*” in the original language of the Bible and as it is used in our text means “*Confusion*”. It was derived from the Hebrew word “*Balal*” which means to mix, jumble or confuse. The name represents the place where God confused the language of humanity.

Babel Generation refers to post-flood descendants of Noah unified by a single language, who decided to build a city and a tower reaching heaven contrary to the purpose and instruction of God that they should disperse across the globe and repopulate the earth. The confusion of their language halted the construction and forced them to scatter across the earth. To understand the implication of their actions and their lessons for the church and the world today, we shall consider three subtopics:

1. Building a civilization that excluded God
2. Divine judgment upon rebellious men
3. Source of true greatness and enduring blessing

1. Building a civilization that excludes God

Genesis 11:1-4, Genesis 10:9-10, 1 Chronicles 1: 10, Hosea 8:4, 2 Peter 2:5, Proverbs 16:25

Babel project actually started with Nimrod. He was a great grandson of Noah through Ham and Cush. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and lived as a model of godliness in that dispensation; the same with Shem his son. Both of them were probably still alive and preaching, shining divine light in a dark world at the time the event in our text began. Unfortunately Nimrod chose a different path. According to Genesis 10:10, he was the first warrior on earth; the greatest hunter in the world, and the first human being to build a kingdom. The first among the cities he built that formed that kingdom was Babel. Obviously he was the ring-leader of the generations’ rebellion captured in our text.

Babel generation under Nimrod’s leadership, being survivors of catastrophe, inheritors of a fragile second chance, still being hunted by fear and memories of their past losses and prospect of losing relevance, becoming erased and scattered were determined to stay together and create something that could withstand another deluge or flood, and by so doing put their own destiny into their own hands. Their efforts and statement revealed that they seek permanence, immortality, safety, security, progress and prosperity. But they were motivated by fear, crude ambition, pride and defiance. This was why God intervened. The Tower of Babel was a new thing, an innovation of some sort. It was meant to be a path and project that will bring builders to fame, stardom and greatness. However, it would have been a society grossly deficient in spirituality, morality and ethics. It would have self-destruct.

2. Divine judgment upon rebellious men

Genesis 11:4-9, Judges 17:6, 21:25, 2 Chronicles 15:3-6, Proverbs 21:30, 19:21, John 3:3, 5, Psalm 127:1

God's statement revealed that Babel project poses great danger to the survival of human race. If it had succeeded, the world would have been a global society, well-advanced but lacking in spiritual conviction and commitment to God, with no distinct nation, cultures or languages. It would have been a totalitarian society that sacrifices individual liberty for common goal. Without spiritual purpose or guidance, it would have eventually become ruined by internal decay, strife, selfishness, greed, oppression, deceit, delusion, injustice and violence reminiscent of Jewish lives in the book of judges and prevalent in many so-called developed and civilized nations today. God stepped in, judged them and scattered them so they can refocus on His original plan Genesis 1:26, 9:1. Division, frustration and failure brought an end to their deliberate attempt to overturn divine counsel.

Interestingly, there was a positive side to the judgment. Speaking different languages delivered them as a community from the tyranny of one voice whether of regime, culture or ego. The preservation of their history teach modern society that building a Tower does not change human nature, hence cannot be an harbinger of true unity and sustained societal progress and development. Except a man be born again, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God John 3:3, 5. For believers, it is clear that to make headway in life either in secular or spiritual endeavours, our unity must revolve around God and around our individual and collective commitment and dedication to all that Jesus Christ is, stands for and represents.

3. Source of true greatness and lasting blessings

Genesis 12:1-4, Hebrews 11:8, 1 Samuel 2:7-8, Mathew 18:1-4, 20:25-28, Proverbs 18:12, 1 Peter 5:5-6, 1 Corinthians 12:13

The quest of Babel generation for greatness is captured in a single statement i.e. to make a name for themselves. In other words, they wanted fame, honour and power. They wanted to be seen as earthly men who had captured and conquered all human limitations in the world and are ascending into heavenly realm where God is enthroned. In their ascent, they planned to gate-crash into heaven without invitation, without repentance, without new birth, without cleansing, regeneration or renewal; and without relationship with Jesus Christ our Saviour. They intend storming heaven and grabbing its glory with mud-stained hands. This was why they failed.

Aspiration for greatness must be defined within divine and scriptural boundaries. The scriptures clearly defined true greatness and prescribe what those who truly wanted to be great must do. True greatness is sourced in God and absolutely depends on Him; on His provision, providence, sovereignty, influence and guidance. It is built on foundation

of selflessness, humility, obedience to God, love for humanity and sacrificial service. It makes men willingly endure life's challenges to contribute meaningfully to the well-being and progress of others. This was what Christ did Philippians 2:5-11. This was the path Abraham trod Genesis 12:1-4, Hebrews 11:8. Desire to be known, to be accepted, to be admired and celebrated is innate in every human being. But such desire is wrong and sinful if it leads through a path that excluded God, His guidance and governance.

There is Babel in every unconverted and unregenerate man, expressed as a desire to do their own things in their own way irrespective of who is hurt by their actions, the demands of the scriptures or commandment of God. Body perforations, tattooing, nude dressing and gender distortions are just a few examples of how this is expressed. Communal and societal Babel is expressed in modern times through globalization, technological advancement and social media privileges presently uniting the world, flattening local cultures and languages, promoting self-reliance and personal success above divine and communal dependence. Many adherents' to these privileges who ignored, neglected or reject moderating influence of moral, ethical and spiritual foundation and boundaries have predictable end like the Tower of Babel.

God through Jesus Christ and the Gospel offers a way out. Babel's curse has been reversed at Pentecost. Believers from different languages, cultures and nations individually and corporately, after Holy Spirit's baptism acquires and exhibits great capacity for unprecedented unity, and ability to bless the world and become blessed by our diversities as we obey God and fulfil the Great Commission. Our experiences showed that the path to true greatness is ordained to pass through the doorway of whole-hearted submission to God and sustained commitment and dedication to his will and service.