

Anthology | Learning to Love the Stories of God

Week 1: Tower of Babel

Read the story:

When?

During the era of Creation and Fall. This story occurs after the great flood (Noah and the Ark) and before God makes His covenant with Abraham. At this point, there is one primary people group of Noah's direct descendents who share one common culture, language, and aspiration for their tribe; namely, becoming a great nation.

Who?

People from the East (Noah's descendents). God, the Trinity ("let *us*" in v.7).

Where?

The story occurs in the plain in Shinar (also called Babylonia, an ancient region of Mesopotamia) until the people are scattered over the whole earth at the end of the story.

Summarize the story:

The narrative begins with a people group sharing everything in common-especially their language. They decided to build a tower to the heavens to make a name for themselves.

God sees their attempts and their hearts, acknowledges that without intercession they will succeed in their prideful pursuits. God then intercedes by descending to confuse their languages and disperse the people all over the face of the earth.

Leader Notes:

One of the really important aspects of this story is theme in the bible that from the beginning, God's mission has been to fill the world with a family of God-glorifiers and worshippers (See Genesis 1:28 & 9:1). A clumped up, homogenous group of people building towers to show off their own impressiveness is a complete rejection and abandonment of God's game plan for human beings and planet earth. They're looking to their own accomplishments rather than relying on the Lord. They're looking to their own glory rather than the Lord's, which will leave them unfulfilled in the end. And God's intervention is actually gracious because to allow them to continue in their own plans; while they would have "succeeded" in building a tower; they would have ultimately failed by rejecting God and His purpose and mission for their lives.

Analyze the story:

Attributes of God displayed:

- God is present. (He sees and knows what the people of earth are doing.)
- God is loving (He cares about His people like a good Father.)
- God graciously intercedes. (God regularly intervenes on behalf of His people not being given over to their own sinfulness and idolatry.)
- God is passionate about His glory (He doesn't tolerate people seeking their own glory over His.)
- God hates idolatry. (He goes to great lengths; even changing their languages and scattering them rather than letting them continue to pursue their idols.)
- God is powerful. (He's able to change the languages they speak.)

- God is trinitarian/communal. (He consults the Trinity- "let us".)
- God is creative (He gives the people new and beautiful languages even while He's confusing them.)
- God is passionate about having a people that worship him fill the entire earth.

Who is who in the story? (Who is like us? Who is like Christ?)

- We are like the people in that we pursue our own desires and glory rather than God's.
- We are like the people in that we rely on our own efforts and look to our achievements for worth and validation and identity (i.e. We want to be impressive).
- We are like the people in that we care about glorifying the group/club/team/nation that we are a part of more than we care about glorifying God.
- We are like the people in that we abandon and neglect God's goal of the whole earth being filled with a family of God glorifiers because we (like the people in this story) prefer to clump up with other people who look like us.
- God's actions in the story foreshadow Jesus in that He intercedes for us to prevent us from continuing on in our own sin and idolatry to our own destruction.
- God's actions foreshadows what Jesus would do in that instead of trying to ascend to heaven, Jesus descends to earth to save us, make us His family, and send us out on His mission. (v. 7 "Come, let us go down there..."

Connect the story:

Parallel Statements:

- God came down to intervene on behalf of His people.
- God doesn't tolerate idolatry and goes to great lengths to move people's affections from idols to Himself.
- God will be faithful to build His kingdom and won't allow any man's kingdom to get in the way.
- God is relentlessly pursuing His mission of filling the Earth with a family of His worshippers.

Apply the story:

- Repent from pursuing our own kingdoms and missions instead of God's kingdom and His mission.
- Be humbled and remember that our accomplishments amount to nothing apart from Him.
- Build relationships with people are not like you because Jesus built relationship with us when we were very much unlike us.
- Willingly choose to lay down your kingdom in order to build God's kingdom:
 - Church planting in a local and global context - we are sent out into all the earth to draw people's attention to God.
 - Share the gospel - we are called to make God's glory known to the ends of the earth.
 - Be willing to go to unfamiliar and uncomfortable places as Jesus came down to earth.
- Remember God is faithfully at work for our good even when it hurts.

Who needs this story?

Leader Notes:

- People who are apathetic about God's mission.
- People who feel like they have no purpose in life.
- People who are bored and always only hang out with folks just like them.
- Proud people who are sacrificing everything to build their kingdom.
- People who are unaware of their idolatry and God's passionate hatred of idols.
- People who don't feel apart of a family.