

Understanding Unity through the Tower of Babel

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Genesis 11:1-9

Over the last couple of months, we have looked at a few events that happened in the beginning – the creation, the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the flood. In this lesson, we are talking about the Tower of Babel. Incidentally, this is the only one of these events not mentioned in the New Testament. Yet this teaches us some important lessons about unity. Unity is desirable, but we will see that not all unity is pleasing to God.

Unity Allows People to Work Together

- At this time, the people shared the same language and settled in the same place (Genesis 11:1-2)
- This proximity and mutual understanding allowed them to work together – would be impossible without that
- They made a plan to build a city and a tower (Genesis 11:3-4) – they were able to do this by working together

Unity Enables People to Achieve Great Things

- Just because they did something “great” does not mean they did something “good” [more on this later]
- God came down and saw what they were doing (Genesis 11:5-6) – He said that “nothing...will be impossible for them”
- What they could do together was greater than what they could do on their own (cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12)

Unity Requires a Common Understanding

- God said the people’s “same language” enabled them to accomplish what they did (Genesis 11:6)
- God stopped them and scattered them by confusing their language (Genesis 11:7-9)
- A community/society that cannot communicate with one another cannot prosper – God altered their means of communication, not their plan; the plan was the same, but the effort was now futile

Unity Must Be According to God’s Will

- Remember why they were building this city and tower – to not be scattered over the earth (Genesis 11:4)

- But God's will was for them to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28; 9:1, 7) – their plan was contrary to His will; we often notice their arrogant attitude in wanting to "make for [themselves] a name" (Genesis 11:4), but there was more to it than this
- Eventually, God will put an end to all plans that are contrary to His will (Matthew 15:13; cf. Matthew 7:21-23)

What Does This Mean for Us?

- If unity allows people to work together, then we need to strive to maintain unity (Ephesians 4:2-3)
- If unity enables people to achieve great things, then we need to recognize the importance of being a contributing member of the local church (Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27)
- If unity requires a common understanding, then we need to follow the same standard (Ephesians 4:2-6) and speak the same thing (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- If unity must be according to God's will, then we need to follow His word (John 17:20-21; Philippians 3:16-19)

Conclusion

- "The Lord scattered them abroad...over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:8)
- Unity is a powerful thing – it allows us to work together and accomplish more than we could alone
- Yet unity must be according to God's will – this means we have to follow a common standard (God's word)