

=EVENTS FROM GENESIS=

Lesson 8

The Tower of Babel

AIM: to teach my pupils the characteristics of false religion.

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask the pupils to tell you about the tallest building they have ever seen. You might also suggest that they tell you the name of the highest building in which they have been. Then you can lead on to tell them that one time there were some people who tried to build a tower (or a building) all the way to Heaven. You might call this lesson, "The First Skyscraper."

INTRODUCTION: False religion first entered into the Bible when Adam and Eve made fig leaves to cover their nakedness. It cropped up again when Cain brought of the fruits of his own labors. However, the first organized false religion is found in Genesis 10 and 11. This is what we call "Nimrod and the Tower of Babel." Let us notice man's first attempt to make his own religious organization.

- I. IT WAS BUILT ON A MAN-MADE SALVATION. In Genesis 11:4, notice the words, "whose top may reach unto heaven." Man was trying to work his way to Heaven. From that day to this, man has continued his pursuit of a salvation apart from faith. Below are the different ways that man tries to work his way to Heaven:
1. By doing something himself. This would include thinking that you go to Heaven because of good works, kind deeds, etc.
  2. By having another man do something to save him. This would include believing that baptism saves, that some man can absolve sin, etc.
  3. By believing that some ritual can save. This would include the taking of communion or the Lord's Supper, the observing of some religious ceremony, etc.
  4. By learning some dogma or doctrine. This would include people thinking that being confirmed could save or that mentally accepting the doctrine of a church could save.
  5. By joining an institution. There are many who think they are saved because they belong to some church, lodge, denomination, etc.

All of these are simply continuations of man's effort to save himself. This was a part of the religion of Babel.

- II. IT HAD A HUMAN LEADER. Read Genesis 10:8-10. Nimrod was a king; his headquarters were in Babylon; and he was the leader of the building of the first organized false religion. False religion has always demanded an earthly leader, someone who is a go-between between man and God, someone to represent God on earth. This has always been a desire of man. He wants to bow before someone whom he can see. Babel had this in Nimrod. Read I Timothy 2:5 here and discuss the fact that every Christian is a priest and can go to God for himself. Explain the fact that every Christian in our church, even though a little child, can talk to God just like the Pastor can. He can read the Bible and understand it just like the Pastor can. He can confess his own sins to God just like the Pastor can. God will hear him just like He will hear the Pastor. Explain to them that the Pastor is our leader and in some respects, our example, but that he has nothing as far as spiritual access to God that every Christian cannot have.
- III. IDOLATRY. A careful study of the verses involved, especially later on in the Bible, will show us that the system of Babylon was built around idolatry and idolatrous worship. Images, a drawing of a woman called the Queen of Heaven, before which the people bowed, the carvings and tapestry of the buildings, etc. were all found in Babel. Teach the pupils here what idolatry really is. An idol is anything we put before God. It could be an image in a church building; it could be a thought in our minds. For example, if a person has his own concept of God, this is his idol. On the other hand, it could be another person whom we place before God. It could be an occupation that we place before God. Lead the pupils here to give Christ the first place in their lives.
- IV. A CENTER OF UNITY OR A CITY HEADQUARTERS. This is always a characteristic of false religion. There is a city that is looked to as different from other cities. It is a place that God favors, etc.

- V. THEY MADE THEMSELVES A NAME. In Genesis 11:4, notice the words, “and let us make us a name.” False religion emphasizes the religion itself over the person of Jesus Christ. You can detect it usually by an overemphasis of a name. This can be found in many denominations, and oftentimes even among Baptists we find groups who seem to exalt their certain brand above the Lord Jesus Christ. Some denominations even claim that you must join their denomination to be saved. This certainly is a characteristic of false religion. Take some time here to explain to the pupils that salvation is the acceptance of a Person (Jesus Christ), not the acceptance of a denominational tag or the joining of any institution!
- VI. UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE. In Genesis 10:10, notice especially the word “kingdom.” Nimrod not only was the king of a political kingdom, but he was also leader of a religious system. Here we find the union of church and state. False religion, organized, wants to control and dominate. Hence, they would like to receive money from the government to operate their parochial schools; they would like to have their children ride to parochial schools on tax-supported school buses; they would like to have their religious teachers teach in public school systems. Anything that combines the church and state certainly is false and anti-God.
- VII. UNION. You will notice in Genesis 11:6-8 that God wanted to scatter them. They, however, wanted to unite. Union of churches and denominations certainly **seems** to be wise, on the surface. However, when separate units unite organizationally, of necessity, a leader must be chosen. This leader receives more power, and then each time another union is made, someone receives more power. Finally, there will be a powerful person and a powerful organization controlling the smaller units—which are the local churches. The only thing that Jesus Christ ever established was the local church. The top position in a church is the pastor. There is no position in the work of God higher than this. Do not misunderstand; working together on the part of New Testament churches is certainly desirable, but centralized union tends to create too much power given to one man or to one place. Then finally, the church loses its independence. We see this all about us today.
- VIII. THE USE OF WORLDLY METHODS. They refused to accept God’s methods, and they used their own methods to build their religion. We certainly find this in false religion today. God’s methods are very simple: Preach the Gospel, pray for power, win souls, baptize converts, teach the Bible. They are God’s divine methods, and they constitute His divine program. Because we have failed, our false religionists substitute worldly pleasures, questionable amusements, and unscriptural methods of drawing people. Hence, we come in competition with the world. Of course, we fail and find the church declining. God’s method is very plain. It is outlined in the Bible. May we adhere to it!
1. In the matter of raising money, God has a plan. It is the tithe and the offering. The raising of money for God’s work through cake sales, cake walks, carnivals, bazaars, etc. is simply man-made religion using man-made methods.
  2. The obtaining of church members oftentimes is man-made. Enlistment drives, membership campaigns, etc. deteriorate the church program to nothing more than a club or civic institution. God’s method is to get people born again and then lead them to church membership.
  3. The program of the church oftentimes is a man-made program. Dances, card games, lotteries, etc. certainly have no place in God’s program. We should pattern our church program after the one in the New Testament church.

CONCLUSION: True Christianity is a person righting himself with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The only institution that God has established to perpetuate this kind of Christianity is the local church, self-governing, self-supporting and dependent only upon God. Every person should have true faith in Jesus Christ and hold membership in a Bible-centered, New Testament church.