



God Judges the Nations at Babel

Genesis 11:1–9



LESSON GOAL

Students will understand why and how the Lord scattered the people at Babel.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Recount that all men spoke a common language.
- Explain that men disobeyed and settled in the plain of Shinar.
- Evaluate man's plan to build a tower as sinful.
- Explain the Lord's evaluation of men's actions.
- Describe the Lord's response to men's actions.

KEY VERSE

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city" (Genesis 11:8).

APPLICATION

- Turn from sin; God will judge it.
- Don't be proud like the people of Babel.
- Be humble, obey the Lord, and worship Him.

NEXT WEEK

God Makes a Promise to Abram
Read Genesis 11:27–12:9.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Perhaps as many as a thousand years elapsed between the flood and Babel. You would think that mankind would not have forgotten the lesson of the flood. But while the flood destroyed sinful men, it did not destroy sinful nature. The account of the tower of Babel depicts a tragic rebellion against the authority and commands of a sovereign God.

According to Genesis 11:1, all men spoke one language and one dialect. This fact should not be surprising, since they all were descendants of the sons of Noah. It is possible that this one language was either Hebrew or an original Semitic language that Moses later translated into Hebrew for his readers.

Verse 2 indicates that after the flood, men traveled east, from the region of Ararat (Gen. 8:4) to the fertile crescent. These migrants found an open plain (the land of Shinar) in southern Mesopotamia and began to settle down. As the people gathered in this region, they agreed to stay and make a name for themselves.

The inhabitants of the land of Shinar feared that they would “be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). Although after the flood, God had reiterated His command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1), the people disobeyed it. To prevent being scattered, they decided to build a city and a tower for themselves. The tower would serve as a focal point of their political and religious life and would be a symbol of their unity and strength.

Verse 3 describes the techniques used in building the city and tower. These early builders used fire-hardened brick instead of stone, and tar or asphalt instead of mortar. The materials for the brick and the tar substance are very common in southern Mesopotamia.

Note: God reacted not against the building of the city, but against the people’s wicked motives for building it. These people blatantly rebelled against God’s command to inhabit the entire earth.

What does the phrase “whose top is in the heavens” mean? Scholars offer several interpretations. First, the builders were resisting God’s command to inhabit the whole earth, and so they possibly were attempting to protect themselves from another divine judgment like the flood. We know that the flood covered the highest mountains of the world. Perhaps men thought that if a structure higher than the mountains could be built they would be safe from whatever God might do. Second, the tower could have been designed to satisfy a supposed religious need of the people. They would build a tower unto heaven, a tower dedicated to heaven and its angelic hosts. This would lead to idolatry, and thus the people would be judged accordingly by God. Third, some scholars believe that this tower was a part of the city’s defensive system. Such fortifications were said to be built “up to heaven” (Deut. 1:28).

Additional Reference Materials

*Paradise to Prison:
Studies in Genesis* by
John J. Davis

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur

Creation and Blessing by
Allen P. Ross

Verse 5 speaks of God, during this rebellion, coming “down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.” That God “came down to see” means that He was aware of what was going on and now was officially and judicially taking the situation under direct observation and consideration. The decision to construct a city and tower in order to keep unity no longer could be ignored.

God responded with divine judgment in verse 7. What man refused to do in voluntary obedience to God’s command, he was forced to do. God’s plan was to scatter the people, and He did. God went down to “confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” Once groups of people were isolated from one another by language, they naturally would scatter.

Note: The word “Babel” in verse 9 is connected with the Hebrew word *salal*, which means “to confuse.” Just how God miraculously confused the tongues is unknown; it was a miracle.

As the groups of people departed from Babel, the last memory of the place probably was of a loud “babble” of angry and incoherent noises pouring from the lips of those who had once been friends and fellow citizens. It is hard to imagine the surprised confusion that must have quickly spread through Babel. Presumably, members of each family group still could understand one another, but everyone else would seem to be talking nonsense. Some people may have thought others were mocking them. In the palace, mighty Nimrod, the leader of Babel (Gen. 10:8–10), would have found it impossible to get his servants to carry out his commands. Chaos eventually reigned in the city.

Is it wrong to desire to be unified? Unity of a race is ideal if there is no sin. But man is fallen and the human heart corrupt. A one-world government ultimately would result in a vast, unified anti-God religious philosophy.

One thing is clear from Genesis 11: God did not permit human rebellion to reach the level it had before the flood.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What two animals did Noah send out to see whether the land had dried?
He sent a raven and a dove.

How did Noah know when the land had dried?
The fourth time he sent out the dove, it did not return. By this, Noah knew that the water had dried up enough for the bird to find a place to land and also for the people and animals on the ark to get off.

After he left the ark, what important thing did Noah do to show God how he felt about God’s grace toward him and his family?
He built an altar to the Lord.

How did God respond to Noah’s sacrifice?
He was pleased.

What command did God give Noah after he left the ark?
It was the same command that God had given to Adam and Eve—be fruitful and multiply.

What instructions did God give Noah concerning animals?
Man was now allowed to eat them, once the blood had been removed.

What instructions did God give Noah concerning man?
If any man or animal killed someone, he or it was to be put to death, because man was made in God’s image.

Through Noah, God made a covenant with mankind and all living creatures. What was it, and what was the sign?
God said that He would never again destroy the entire earth with a flood. The rainbow was to be the sign of the covenant.



2
3

Name That Language

Display a Greek alphabet translator in the class. (You can make your own using *Bible Time Crafts for Kids* by Neva Hickerson.) Have the students write their names using Greek letters. For any letter that is not shown, use regular letters. Some names will look almost exactly the same using Greek and Roman letters. Tell the students that today they will learn why God created so many different languages.



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Bilingual Surprise

Play a game that requires you to give verbal instructions (“Simon Says,” for example). In the middle of the game, begin speaking another language. Let the students feel the confusion. After a few minutes, sit down and talk about what happened and how confusing it was to not be able to understand the language.



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3

Roll Call

Tell students to stand when you call their names. After you call all their names and students are standing, tell them to sit back down when they hear their name again. This time, call out their names (first and last) in pig latin. Some students will recognize their names right away. Repeat the names of students who remain standing until they finally recognize them. Is pig latin really another language? Wouldn't it be great if it were this easy to understand another language? How would you feel if everyone around you spoke a different language and you were not being understood or understanding others?



1

2

Babbling Center

Let the students play with building blocks while listening to simple building directions recorded on a tape recorder. After a few simple instructions, the recording should begin to babble. Ask the students whether they were able to understand and follow the directions. Repeat the babbling. Explain that today's lesson is about some builders who had the same problem but for a different reason.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included to use during worship time. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Genesis 11:1–9: Genesis 11:1, a common language among all men; Genesis 11:2, the journey and settlement of the men; Genesis 11:3–4, the plan of the men; Genesis 11:5–6, the Lord's investigation and evaluation; Genesis 11:7–8, the Lord frustrates the men's plan; Genesis 11:9, summary.

Introduction

Many, many years after the flood occurred, there again were many people living in the world. They knew that God had destroyed all the people and all the animals in a great flood because of man's sinfulness. But this did not stop them from sinning. In Genesis 9:1 God told Noah to have children and to spread throughout the whole world, but instead, these people all stayed together in one place. They ignored God's command and rebelled against Him. Again, God had to do some-



thing about rebellious man. However, He was not going to send a flood again. This time He was going to do something else.

Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: How many languages do you think there are in the world today?

Answer: There are more than 3,000 languages spoken in the world today. Some of the most common languages are English, Spanish, French, and German.

LOQ: What languages do you speak and understand?

Answer: *[Tell the students the language(s) you use.]*

LOQ: What does Genesis 11:1 tell us about the languages that the people at that time used?

Answer: Genesis 11:1 tells us that the entire earth used the same language and the same words. Although we don't know what language they used, there was only one language that they all spoke.

LOQ: What benefits do you think there were to speaking the same language?

Answer: One of the benefits of everyone speaking the same language was that it was very easy for people to understand one another. When people use different languages, it is difficult for everyone to understand one another and work together.

LOQ: What did the people do when they found the plain of Shinar?

Answer: Genesis 11:2 says that they settled there. They decided that they would remain in the plain, build homes, and live there. They were not interested in going anywhere else.

LOQ: Do you remember what God told Noah in Genesis 9:1?

Answer: God told him to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

LOQ: Were the men who settled in the plain of Shinar obeying God?

Answer: No. God told man through Noah to fill all the earth. He meant for them to spread out into all the world. Instead, they stayed together.

LOQ: What did the men say that they wanted to do?

Answer: In Genesis 11:3–4 the people said, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly....Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven; let us make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." Because there were very few stones in the plain, they had to make bricks out of the earth. To make the bricks strong and hard, they baked them in an oven. This was very important for making large buildings. When the people settled in the plain of Shinar, they decided to build a city and a great tower that would be very tall. The bricks that they were making would be especially useful for the large tower they planned to build.

LOQ: What did the people mean when they said, "Let us make for ourselves a name" (Gen. 11:4)?

Answer: The people who wanted to make the tower wanted others to see how great they were. Not only were they disobedient in settling in the land instead of filling the earth, but they also were proud and wanted to be famous.

LOQ: What did the Lord do?

Answer: Genesis 11:5 says that “the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.” The Lord does not have to come to earth to see what man is doing because He knows everything that happens everywhere. This verse means that God saw what the men were doing and that He was going to do something about it. In Genesis 11:6, we learn that if God had left them alone, they would have continued to be disobedient more and more. Because they were all together and spoke one language, they were able to cooperate and do many things that were displeasing to the Lord.

LOQ: What did the Lord decide to do in verse 7 and why?

Answer: The Lord decided to “confuse their language.” God caused the people to speak many different languages. He did this so that “they may not understand one another’s speech.” Remember, we discussed how difficult it is to understand one another when we are all speaking different languages. That is exactly what God caused to happen.

LOQ: What happened after God confused their language?

Answer: Genesis 11:8–9 tells us that the people were scattered. Instead of staying together and working together on building the city, many of the people left because it was impossible to understand their neighbors. God made them stop building the city.

LOQ: Where were the people scattered?

Answer: Verse 9 says that “the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth.” Even though the people wanted to remain together against God’s commandment, God made sure that they went into all the earth as He had commanded them to.

Summary

After the flood, people had children, and the population grew again. These people all spoke the same language. This allowed them all to work together because they understood one another. Now, they all were traveling together looking for a good place to live. When they found the land of Shinar, they decided that it would be good for them all to settle there. This was not what God wanted them to do. He had told them to separate from one another and spread out into all the world.

They decided to build a city and a tower “whose top [was] in the heavens” (Gen. 11:4). They wanted to “make a name for [themselves]” (Gen. 11:4). They wanted to be famous and for everyone to think that they were a great and special people. They were proud.

When God saw this, He decided to make sure they did what He commanded. He caused them to speak different languages so they could not understand one another. This made it impossible to work together, and they stopped building the city. By this, God caused all the people to be scattered throughout the earth—just as He had commanded Noah to do in Genesis 9:1.

Application

We already have learned that man is disobedient and rebellious. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. Cain murdered his brother. And God judged the whole world with a great flood to destroy the wicked people who were sinning against Him. After the flood, people began to do wicked things again. The people at Babel were

very proud and wanted to be famous—to have a name for themselves. They also did not want to obey God by filling the entire earth with people. Instead of judging the people with a flood, God did something else. God, who is stronger and wiser than any man, confused the people’s language and caused them to leave the city and be scattered all over the earth, exactly as He wanted. Are you proud? Are you disobedient to God? Remember what God did at the tower of Babel. God was against those people, and He judged them. Do not disobey. Instead, be humble, worship God, and obey Him.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the Bible lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces as you teach the Bible lesson.



Greetings

Before class, make a chart of greetings in various languages. As the students settle down for the Bible lesson, greet them in another language. Show them the chart and practice the greetings together. Tell them that in today’s lesson they will hear where and why God created different languages.



1
2

Language of Love

On a large piece of poster board, write the phrase “I love you” in several languages, including English. As you show the students the poster board, ask them whether they know what the words mean. After they’ve finished guessing the meaning, reveal to them that each translation means the same thing. Explain that in today’s lesson they will learn how all the different languages were created.



Languages of the World

Set up a tape recorder, tapes of different languages, and a globe on a table. As the students arrive, play portions of the tapes and ask whether the students can guess what language the people are speaking and what is being said. Ask the students what languages they’ve heard others speak (or can speak themselves). Tell them that people all around the world speak different languages. Use the globe to point out different countries and tell students which language is spoken there. Play a taped sample of the country’s language, if available. Tell the students that there was a time when everyone in the world spoke one language and that today they will learn why there now are thousands of languages spoken around the world.

Praise and Worship

Great Is the Lord

I Love You, Lord

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

Mighty Is Our God

O Worship the King

Oh, Be Careful

Seek Ye First

The Wise Man and the Foolish Man

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



1
2

All the Children of the World

Give each student a photocopy of the provided world map and a handful of miniature cutout people (you can also use stickers, happy faces, or other cutouts). Tell the students to color the water blue and the land green and then to glue the people all over the map. Remind them that God dispersed the people and confounded their language because they were disobedient to Him.



Mixed-up Languages

Cut out large letters from newspaper headlines or any other source. Have the students glue the letters on a piece of construction paper in a haphazard way. Older students could simply make up words. Print out or write Genesis 11:7 on the bottom of the page. Emphasize that it is difficult to understand other languages because of God’s judgment on Babel.

Variation: Have the students write down ways to say hello in different languages.



1
2

A Great Name

The people of the earth built a city and a tower to make a name for themselves. Have students cut out the pieces of the tower (see page 7.11). Have them “build” the tower and glue it in place to find out whose name we *should* make great.



Learning about Missionaries

Tape pictures of your church’s missionaries onto a world map, marking the countries in which they serve. Display the map in the classroom. Explain to the class the different languages these missionaries must learn in order to speak the truth in those countries.



“God Confuses the Language at Babel”

Use this work sheet with students during your small-group time, or send it home for them to use with their parents. This work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: “Tearing Down Pride”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. Students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



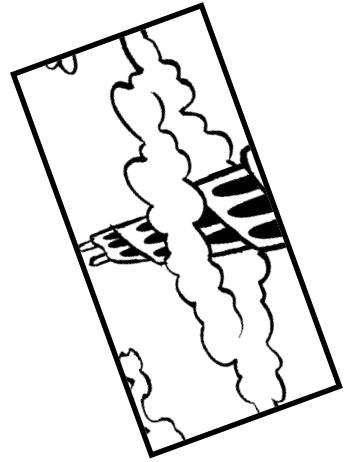
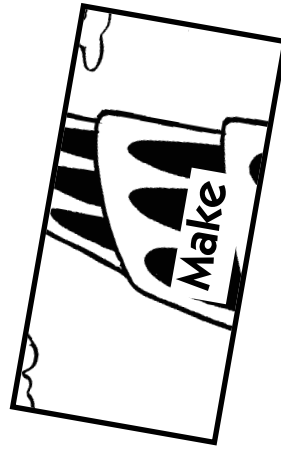
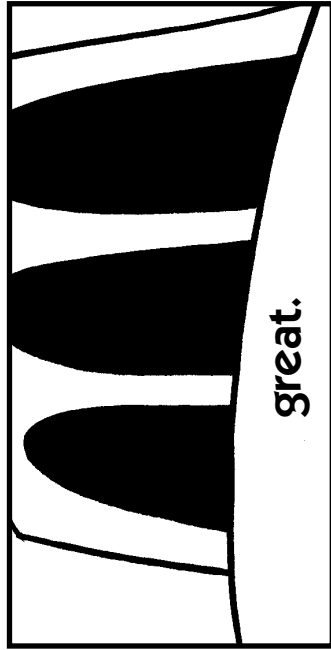
MEMORY VERSE

“So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth; and they ceased building the city” (Genesis 11:8).

A Great Name

The people of the earth built a city and a tower to "make their name great." What should we do?

Cut out the pieces of the tower. "Build" the tower and glue it in place.



World Map



God Confuses the Language at Babel



Genesis 11:1-9

Name _____

1. How many languages does Genesis 11:1 say the people used to speak? _____

2. Where did the people settle? _____

3. Why did the people build with bricks instead of stones? _____

4. Fill in the blanks with words from verse 4.

"Come, let us build for ourselves a _____, and a _____
whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a _____."

5. Circle the two sins that the Bible tells us these people committed.

they lied

they were proud

they did not fill the earth

they stole

6. What did God do to scatter the people throughout all the earth? _____

Tearing Down Pride

Sin always begins with a little thought. The people building the tower of Babel had a prideful thought. Then they said, "Let us make a name for ourselves." Their sin of pride grew as they built the Tower of Babel.

Number the following actions according to the order in which they happened.

_____ Everyone spoke the same language.

_____ God disapproved of their prideful plan.

_____ The people were proud and disobediently settled in the plain of Shinar.

_____ The people began to build their tower.

_____ The people made plans to build a tower that would reach the heavens.

_____ God confused the language and scattered the people over the entire earth.

_____ God told the people to be fruitful and fill the earth.

God has the final word. He will not allow sinful people to alter His plans. Do you have plans for your future? It is not too soon to ask God whether your plans are His plans.

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The definition of pride is _____

I can avoid pride by _____

I learned these truths about God from Genesis 11: _____

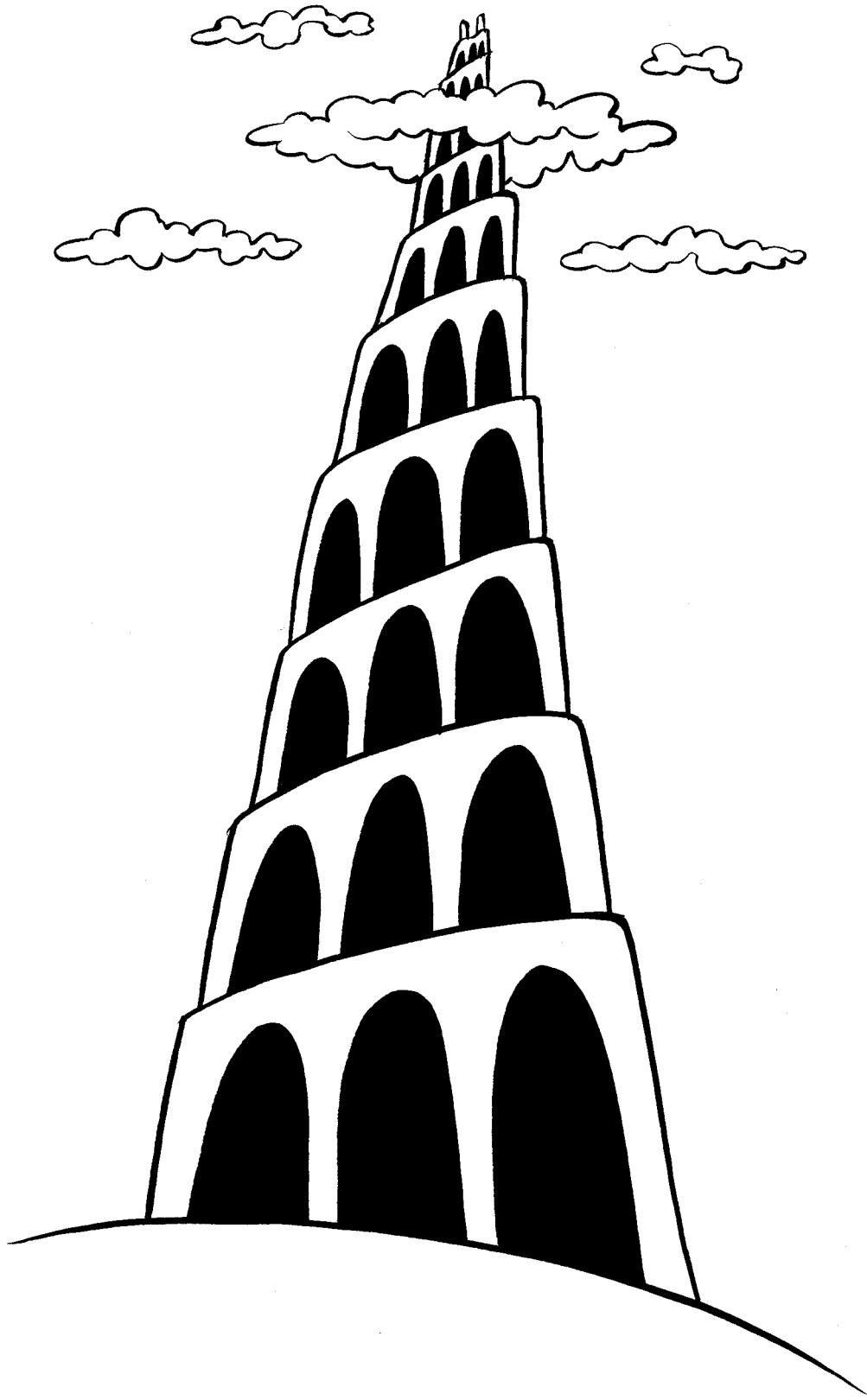
**“Everyone proud in heart is an abomination
to the LORD; though they join forces,
none will go unpunished”
(Proverbs 16:5).**

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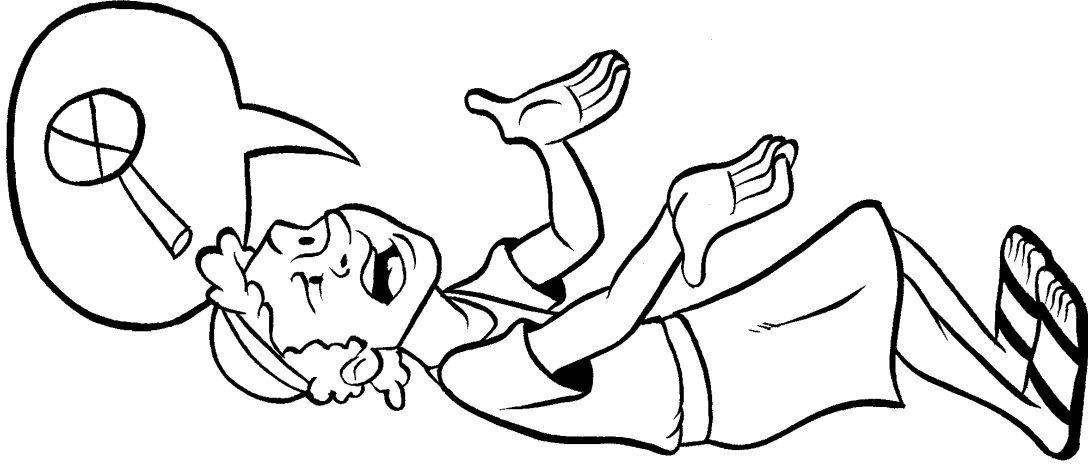
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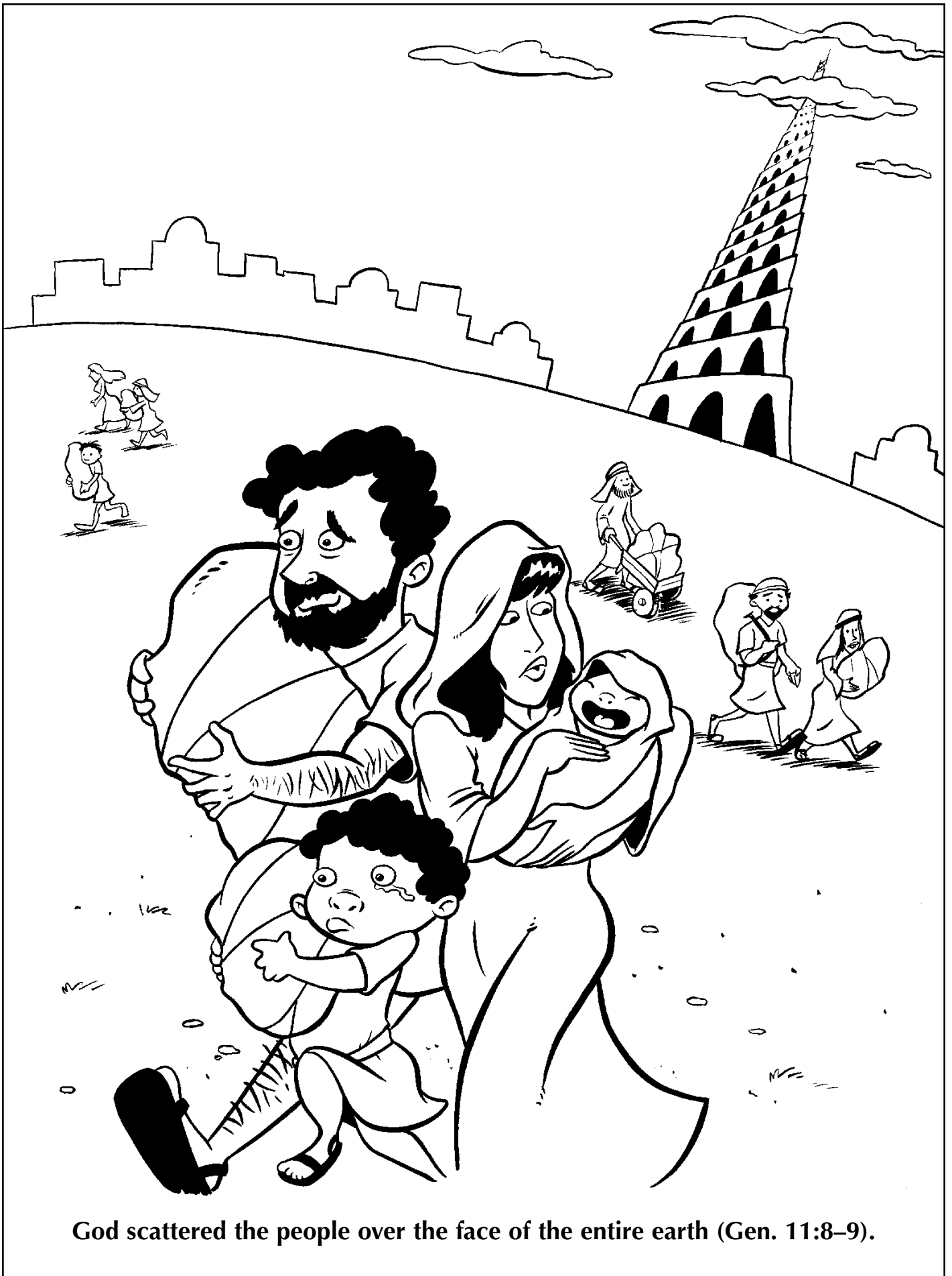
The Tower of Babel



The Tower of Babel



God confused the language of the people of the earth (Gen. 11:7).



God scattered the people over the face of the entire earth (Gen. 11:8-9).

