

WHEN PEOPLE TURN AWAY FROM THE LORD: THE TOWER OF BABEL

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The story about the tower of Babel starts in a happy way. It says that the ancient people were of one language—their words were one. They loved truth. They loved to obey the Lord's truth. Then the story becomes sad. It says that they journeyed from the east.

Now if you think of the spiritual world, you may know that if you want to find the Lord, you look to the east. That is where the Lord dwells in the other world. And so, in the Word, when it talks about somebody going from the east, this means that he or she is going away from the Lord. The people in that ancient church were going away from the Lord. They were getting more and more into evil. This is shown to us in the story by their going into a valley, the valley of Shinar. In the spiritual world, if you go down into the valley, you go down near where hell is. Hell is just below the caverns and caves that open into the valley. The people of Babel went closer and closer to the evil spirits of hell.

Now when people turn away from the Lord, and come closer to hell, what happens? They begin to become worried. They begin to become anxious. No longer trusting in the Lord, they wonder what might happen to them. So what did these people do? They thought they would make themselves safe. They thought they would keep their church alive if they built themselves a city. They would build a tower, with its head, or top, in heaven. But right away we can see there is trouble.

If one wants to be safe, and wants to come near to the Lord, then one should use the Lord's truth. Everyone should love that truth and obey it. This would be like taking natural stones from the ground and using them, sticking them together with proper mortar. And in this way a good city, a strong city, could be built. And a tower could be built that would last. But remember that these people did not trust in the Lord any more. And so in the story we are told that they did not use stone. Instead, they used brick. And they did not use proper mortar. Instead, they used slime or tar that they found nearby. And what does this tell us? It tells us that they thought they could make themselves safe. They thought they could keep their church going forever—not by the truths of the Lord's Word, but by their own ideas. These are like the bricks that they had cut out. And the tar that they used to stick them together shows us how proud they were of their ideas—how much they liked their own ideas, and how little they liked the Lord's truth. And what happened? We are told that they did not even finish building the tower. They were scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

This is what happens when people turn away from the Lord—turn away from His truth and His Commandments. When people think that their own ideas are the right way of doing things, they will, before long insist that their own opinion is the right one. They love themselves so much that they won't listen to what the Lord says. They won't listen to what other people say. Quarreling breaks out, and fighting. People split up and go their way, all by themselves. It was as if the Lord came down and caused their language to be changed so that they could not hear each other any more. And they were scattered over the whole earth.

Now if we would understand this message a little bit more, let us think about our homes for a moment. Say three or four children come together and want to play a game. What happens if each child in his or her own mind decides to play by his or her own rules? They are not going to play by the rules of the game that are set down. They are going to play their own rules, the rules that they make up. We call this cheating. And so they begin their game, each intending to play by his or her own rules and not by the rules of the game. And we all know what happens. In no time at all they are quarreling and accusing each other of cheating. They are fighting. And soon the game is broken up and everybody goes away, some to their rooms and some to do something else—all angry with one another, because they would not play according to the rules.

What if Mother and Father and all the boys and girls in the home each decide that they are going to live according to their own rules in the home? They will eat when they please. They will go to sleep when they please. They will get up when they please. They will play the radio or TV when they want and as loud as they want. Each has a different idea about these things. What does it make the home like? It makes the home like hell. Because in the home, also, there has got to be a set of rules that all of the people agree to obey. If there is a proper set of rules that are just and fair, then everybody in the home will be happy. They will live at peace with one another. And that home will stay together. The same thing is true in the country. We have to have a set of laws that are just and fair and that everybody agrees to obey. And as long as most people do this, the country has peace. People live happily together. They are able to work in peace and enjoy their work. But what happens if more and more people decide that they will make up their own laws? We call this "anarchy." It leads to chaos. Fighting and quarreling and revolutions start. The country or the empire is broken up. And it is the same between nations in the world. If the world is to be a happy place to live, all people must agree to live by a certain set of rules that they will all try to obey.

But where are we going to find such a set of rules? Rules that everybody—all nations, all people in a nation, all people in a house, all children—can live according to and find peace and happiness? We must turn to the Lord. For the Lord alone is loving enough and wise enough to know of such a set of rules. He

knows how to bring happiness and peace to everybody. And where are these rules to be found? They are in the Lord's Word. The most important rules in the Lord's Word are the Ten Commandments. And so that there would be no mistake that these are the Lord's rules and not the people's rules—when these Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai—you remember the first words were: "And God spake all these words."

So here are the rules that all of us should obey if we would live together in happiness and peace. And just think for a moment what the world would be like, what our nations would be like, what our homes would be like, if everybody agreed to keep the Ten Commandments. Suppose that everybody loved the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth; everybody kept the Lord's Word, and His name holy; everybody worshiped the Lord together; everybody honored their father and mother; nobody killed anybody; nobody committed adultery; nobody stole anything; nobody told lies; nobody coveted or envied anybody anything. What would we have if everybody tried to keep these rules? We know what we would have. We would have heaven on earth. People would be bound together in a heavenly society, in a holy city New Jerusalem, Instead Of Babel. Because for those who keep the Commandments of the Lord, there is peace inside of them, and in their homes. And when they come into the life after death, they have peace and happiness there, too. They find their eternal lot in heaven.