



BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

INTO THE WORD

LESSON 6

- **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS LESSON:**
 - The false promise of Babel
 - The calling and separation of Abram (Abraham)
 - The difference between Abraham and Lot
- **BIBLICAL THEMES:**
 - Building for God's Kingdom not Man's Kingdom
 - The eternal promises of God
 - The blessings of obedience
- **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES:**
 - Psalm 127:1
 - Acts 2:1-4
 - 2 Corinthians 6:17
 - Psalm 1
- **FOR FURTHER STUDY:**
 - Courageous Leadership, Bill Hybels
 - The Wisdom and Power of the Cross, J.T. Pugh
 - How to Win Friends and Influence People, Dale Carnegie
 - Servant Leadership, Larry C. Spear

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Introduction:

Like the God who created us, humanity possesses enormous potential. Massive advancement in the understanding of the natural sciences, health care, education, government, engineering and technology testifies to the creativity, ingenuity, drive, tenacity and perseverance of humanity. The digital revolution of the late 20th and early 21st century is mind boggling, and growth is occurring on a daily basis.

However, despite our many commendable achievements, human depravity in all its multiple manifestations continues to corrupt our world. High ranking government officials, sports heroes, entertainment stars, corporate executives, educational and religious leaders and members of the medical profession are not exempt from moral and ethical malpractice. Pursuing earthly treasures of gold or fame/reputation before God is a form of idol worship, and the devastating impact of sin remains to challenge the greatness of our achievements.

In this lesson, we will explore the difference between using God's gifts for the furthering of our own "kingdoms", and surrendering and submitting those God-given gifts back to Him. God asks His people to follow after Him and place their talents, characters and will into His hands. Only what we do with, in and through God can truly bless others. In taking a look at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, and the call and separation of Abraham in Genesis 12, we will discover the differing consequences of building for ourselves, and building the kingdom of God.

Into the Word:

1. The Tower of Babel

The Origin of Languages/The Beginning of Nations

After the flood, God commanded Noah and his sons to replenish the earth. In fulfilling this command, the human race was to spread out gradually over the face of the entire earth to repopulate it. Instead of spreading out over the earth, however, they disobeyed God's command and decided to build a city and a high tower.

○ Genesis 11:1-4 (NLT)

¹At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.³They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Why did the descendants of Noah build the city and tower?

- Why do you think they wanted to be famous and keep from being scattered all over the world?

The builders of the tower were displaying the following characteristics:

- Disobedience
- Self-focus
- Stubborn desire to do things their own way

The city they were building was to be the center of humanity, and the tower was to be the center of religious activity – it is believed the tower was important to their religion, having to do with astronomy.

God understood the power of unity and focus.

- Genesis 11:6 (NLT)
⁶“Look!” he said. “The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!

According to the scripture, until this point, everyone spoke one language. As God wanted them to scatter, He confounded their languages.

- Genesis 11:7-9 (NLT)
⁷Come, let’s go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won’t be able to understand each other.”⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Why do you think God confounded their languages?

- Do you see a relationship to the way God acted here and in His banishing the fallen Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden?

In our fallen state, the creative and constructive abilities that God has given to humanity will become stale and destructive if we do not submit ourselves to God. If we attempt to do things (even good things) in our own strength, we may experience burn-out or frustration; we may become so hungry for power and success that we find ourselves addicted to the accolades of others rather than seeking for God’s approval. We have multiple examples of the axiom: “Total power totally corrupts.” Our world is full of fallen heroes, men and women who have achieved greatness but have lacked the moral character to sustain that greatness, glittering corporations that have slipped into bankruptcy, crashing stock markets, fallen empires, and monumental ruins that bear the scars of war and battle.

Could it be that God was acting out of mercy when He confounded the language of the people who were building the tower so they were no longer able to understand one another and continue their project? God is always looking for an opportunity to bring redemption, to reverse the power of sin and restore right relationship between himself and His corruption. We are finite beings who are unable to see as God sees. We must trust His word and His will for our lives.

A determined people began to build a city and tower, but the Bible says:

- Psalms 127:1 "Except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it." We must watch what we build and how we build it.

As Christians, we must watch what we build and how we built it. This can be a struggle for all of us. We must be prayerful about the decisions we make and our motives behind them.

God's judgment on man's disobedience in building the Tower of Babel resulted in the origin of the different languages and different nations.

- Shem's sons went to the east; his descendants became the Persians, Arabs and the Hebrews
- Ham's sons went south and became Africans
- Japheth's sons went north and became Russians and Europeans

All three scattered races turned to idol worship and with its consequences were moral decay, cruelty and tyranny. Men had forgotten about God and began to worship other things.

- Romans 1:21-25 (NKJV)
²¹Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

God Restores Unity and Language in the New Testament Outpouring of the Holy Ghost

God once again restores unity and one language miraculously in the new testament on the Day of Pentecost.

- Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV)
¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Although the Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Weeks (the giving of the law) heard the disciples of Jesus speak in their own multiple languages (Acts 2:8-11) after the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost, each language was give by the Spirit ("as the Spirit gave them utterance"). It was a supernatural language given and inspired by God.

True unity among a body of believers is present when the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives, our speech (both in our native tongue and our supernatural language). Only through complete submission to the Spirit of God can we work together to build the Kingdom of God. This is God's vision for His church.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Why do you think God chose language as a demonstration of the infilling of believers on the Day of Pentecost?

- How can the church reveal God's Kingdom on earth?

2. Abraham the Kingdom Builder

Genesis 12 tells the story of the Biblical patriarch, Abraham (then Abram). Abraham is a great example of someone who dedicated himself to the building of God's kingdom and not his own.

- Hebrews 11:10 (NLT)
¹⁰Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

In the midst of this dark and perverse world, God found a man with whom He could make His covenant. The covenant God made with Abraham continues to bless every believer today. God's promises are eternal and reach to all generations. Anything we build with, through, and in God has eternal impact. We will have to wait until heaven to fully understand the ramifications of the Godly choices we have made!

God's Call of Separation

The Abrahamic story begins with a call to separation:

- Genesis 12:1-3 (NKJV)
¹Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The call to Abram was a personal one. God wanted him to completely separate himself from the old life.

- Abram's encounter with God must have been supernatural, significant, and sincere. He left everything in his past to follow an invisible God to a city that he had never seen. Archaeological evidence suggests that the city of Ur (the city Abraham left) was a sophisticated civilization with much to offer from a worldly perspective. Abraham may have left behind great riches and an established position to follow after God.
- All he had was a word from God and a promise. We are not given much information as to the character of Abraham at this stage in the Biblical narrative. However, we can infer that his desire to follow after the spoken word of God was strong. In his obedience to the call of God, Abram demonstrates tremendous faith and trust. Rather than placing his hope in human hands, (like Nimrod who build the tower of Babel) Abram chose to place himself in the everlasting arms of God.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- How does Abram's call of separation and faith relate to us today?

- In the same way, God wants us to leave the old ways of a faithless, sinful life.
- It is similar to a person's life changing when they become married.
- God made Abram a promise, as He continues to make a promise to us:
 - John 14:2-3 (NLT)
²There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.
 - Luke 24:49 (NLT)
⁴⁹"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."
- In a similar way to his call to Abram to "come out from among them", God also asks His people today to separate themselves from a lifestyle of sin and to receive the promises of God in return.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 (NLT)
¹⁷Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. ¹⁸And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

So the story continues that Abram left his country, taking Lot his nephew, and his wife, Sarai. He was 75 years old and had no children.

The Bible, however, does not hide the flaws of its heroes. This is something that offers us hope. The story of Abraham, while offering a great example of a man who trusted in God, also demonstrates that God works on and through the weaknesses of mankind. Abram lied about his relationship with his wife, Sarai, multiple times, claiming she was only his sister, in order to prevent the king of Egypt, Abimelech, from killing him. God intervened on Abram's behalf, continuing to shape and mold him into the great leader he would become.

God blessed the sojourners with great wealth. However, no sooner do we hear about riches, and strife enters the family. Abram and Lot's herdsmen begin to argue. Abraham demonstrated wisdom and leadership in handling the dispute in the way he did. He realized that the time had come to part way with his nephew, so he generously offered Lot a choice:

- Genesis 13:8-14 (NLT)

⁸ Finally Abram said to Lot, "Let's not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives!" ⁹ The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I'll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹² So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³ But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴ After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Why did Lot fail? What can we learn from this example?

Abram	Lot
Walked by faith	Walked by sight
Generous	Selfish
Looked for a city made my God	Looked for a city destroyed by God

Lot chose selfishly, seeing only with earthly, temporal eyes, and his family eventually became corrupted by the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah.

God observed the wickedness in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah where Lot lived with his family. The Lord appeared unto Abraham to tell him the cities would be destroyed.

Abraham reveals his shepherd's heart in his plea to God to save the city for the sake of any righteous living there. Abraham had the heart of an intercessor. He sought the Lord to spare the city if there were 50 righteous, then 45, 40, 30, 20 and finally 10.

- Although Lot knew the God of Abram, it was Abram who was separated from the wickedness who was able to intercede for the inhabitants. There were not 10 righteous – He was only able to spare Lot and some of the members of his family.
 - Genesis 19:29 (NLT)
 - ²⁹But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.
- Angels came and forcibly removed Lot, his wife and 2 unmarried daughters.

Lot went to Sodom (a city built on aspirations of men) to gain, but lost. Consider the legacy of his decision:

- His daughters who married men in the city were lost
- His wife looked back holding on to an Angel's hand
- All his possessions were destroyed
- He went rich and came back with nothing
- The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is a solemn warning to those who want to live ungodly lives. Ultimately, God will judge sin; it is consistent with his character of mercy and grace.
 - 2 Peter 2:6 (NLT)
 - ⁶Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people.
- The common belief is that the destruction of these 2 cities is what brought about the formation of the Dead Sea.

Conclusion:

God's commandments and promises will bring blessings and promises will bring blessings into our lives. There is a cost involved and sacrifices to be made as we hand over our lives to God, but the rewards are eternal. God's Word is truth and the foundations upon which His Kingdom is built can never be shaken, and within His Kingdom is healing for the nations.

Psalm 1 gives us a good recipe for success

- Psalm 1:1-6 (NKJV)

¹Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ²But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper. ⁴The ungodly *are* not so, but *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.