

Labor Lessons from a Babel Builder

Genesis 11:1-9
September 1, 2024

Good morning! It's good to see you today! Sitting all pretty in your neat little rows and very nice clothes. But I must ask, however, why are you all not at work? Do any of you work? Or do you just sit around all day and sing, bow your heads and hug? This is highly unusual. I understand you have a holiday called Labor Day tomorrow to celebrate your work by not working? I like that idea.

Excuse me, I don't think I introduced myself. My name is Bob, Plumb Bob. I'm a builder by trade and I hope you can understand my language OK. A few years back, me and thousands of other builders were working on a skyscraper that would reach all the way up to heaven! It was amazing! The architect designed it as the most incredible building ever to be built. And everyone worked on it, even many people that had never worked in construction before. Everyone got in on the action making bricks, carrying bricks, mixing mortar, and so on. (Anyone have any steal toed sandals?) It was hot work but we could see it growing and growing and growing higher and higher reaching up toward the clouds. We were all part of Babel Builders, Inc. Our CEO was a guy named Nimrod whose idea it was to build this thing and everybody thought he was the best thing since the ark. It tells a little about him in Genesis 10 that you can read later, but he really led us away from the one true God who created, saved, and loved us. You have some leaders like that today. Some in Hollywood, some in athletics, some in politics, and some even in the church. Don't follow them! You'll see why not.

Well, as we were building our tower, the oldest man on earth came by to see what we were doing. He was already about 700 years old. His name was Noah and he lived through a worldwide flood a couple hundred years before we started our tower. He and his wife and sons had seen things no one else has seen since. He knew what it was like before the flood. He also had some very powerful personal times with his God that may be your God too?

Noah's dad even knew Adam who was the very first human being. According to what Noah told us his dad told him, Adam and his wife lived in a perfect place where they didn't really have to actually work as we know it. They were gardeners taking care of a beautiful place called Eden. It was a pleasant occupation and mostly involved picking fruit and petting animals. But when they disobeyed God they had to leave that perfect place and start actually working for a living. God cursed the ground to produce thorns and thistles, which it still does, and he told Adam that from then on he and his descendants would have to work hard with painful labor and plenty of sweat. Do any of you all ever sweat? It feels great in here, especially compared to Babylon.

God also told Adam's wife, Eve, that she would have to labor to bear children, although I don't think Labor Day has anything to do with that kind of laboring. But that's where labor came from. Adam and Eve messed things up for all of us. Your Bible has a lot to say about labor and how to work for your boss and if you're a boss how to treat your employees. If you're not reading it daily, you should. You have a wonderful gift we didn't have in my day in Babylon.

Anyway, when the worldwide flood was over, Noah and his family came out of the big boat along with all the animals and their God told them to spread out over all the freshly washed earth. But we didn't. My parents, grandparents, and great grandparents all kind of stayed together with themselves and everyone else. We liked it better that way. We built a huge city where we could all be with each other. It wasn't as big as some of your cities today, but it was really big for our time. And right near the city, we built this huge tower.

Now the tower had a couple purposes. 1. It united us. This was something we did together that we could point to and say, "We did this!" It was so great, we were all working together on a common goal until we got thwarted. We could all gather there for special holidays and festivals.

2. It was a place of worship. Our priests and priestesses would go to the top every time we completed a new layer and offer sacrifices to the gods of the sun, moon, and stars. They believed we could tell the future by the way the stars appeared in the sky and they believed they were really powerful gods even though Noah told us that they weren't gods at all and that there was only one true God. Nevertheless, you know how popular opinion goes and the people wanted to worship the heavens. You gotta give the people what they want, right? The name of our city, Babylon, even means Gate of God, which is what we thought our tower would be.

Even today, some of your historians say that Nimrod's wife started all the nonsense of idol worship and a lot of things you all call the New Age movement actually started back at our Tower. There's nothing new about it. I saw in your newspaper where some people still think the stars control their lives with horoscopes. How horrible! There are many efforts to melt all the religions into one so there won't be any disagreement. Take it from me, don't do it! They're **not** all the same! There are also efforts to bring about one world order to increase efficiency and eliminate conflict. Take it from me, that's a horrible idea! Unless and until all humanity is united under Jesus Christ, an anti-Christ will take the world over a cliff from which you cannot return. That's in your Bibles too. There's a big push today toward artificial intelligence and that it's the answer to everything. Sounds like a tower to me. Beware of anything that makes those kind of promises unless it's the God of everything.

After we had worked on the tower a good while, the strangest thing happened. Noah's God came down from above and stopped our work. When we tried to restart it again, we couldn't understand each other. Everyone was speaking gibberish. Each one suddenly had a different language. A bunch of babble. Which sounds like the name of our city, Babylon and the name of our tower, the Tower of Babel.

After we hit this roadblock, we did decide to spread out, too little too late to save us a lot of misery. The tower was kind of pyramid shaped and today, I understand there are a ton of pyramid shaped structures all over the world, central and south America, Asia, Africa, etc. I think after our people scattered, they took the tower's blueprints with them and used them to build their own towers to worship the same stars and sun and all the hosts of heaven still not learning their lesson. Well, I did learn a few lessons and as I've thought about it since, I'd like to share a couple thoughts with you about our work and yours this Labor Day weekend.

1. Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Your Bibles tell you in 1 Cor 10:31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." and in Col 3:17 "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." After I saw what happened at the tower, I came to believe like Noah. There is only one true God and all these others are cheap imitations, lies of the devil. And based on what happened to us, you'd better find out what He wants you to do and do it, for if you disobey Him, like we did, He has a way of destroying all the work you've already done. He can bring confusion whenever you're trying to do something that doesn't glorify Him and He can frustrate your work. He can also bless you if you seek Him. So if He says spread out, you'd better spread out. If says worship Me, you'd better worship Him. If He says don't worship other gods, don't do it.

Which brings up number 2. Don't let your job become your idol. It has for an awful lot of people. Although we were building this tower to worship the gods, the tower itself became a god, an idol. An idol is anything you look to for purpose, fulfillment, and meaning. And that's what this tower became for us and that's what your work can become for you. God does want you to work. He does want you to do great things but not for the sake of the things themselves and not just for yourself. Whenever that happens, your work becomes your idol. Don't find your identity and life's purpose in your work alone. Your life is much bigger and more important than just your job. Find your identity and purpose in God and do your work for His glory. To put a smile on His face. Many people in your culture worship their jobs and spend all their energy on them without honoring the God who gave them their gifts and strength to do those jobs.

Some people worship their careers. Oh they may not burn incense to them, but they burn the midnight oil to be recognized or advanced. They sacrifice their children, their

spouses, their marriages, and their health on the altar of promotion. They look to their career, dare I say, pray to it to provide peace of mind, heart, and body through the money they earn? Careers are great and can be a way of glorifying God. But if it's all about you and your career and your ambition and advancement, it becomes a false god like our tower and when it collapses, all your self-worth and value goes with it. If you're looking to your work to make you happy or fulfilled or to provide for you without realizing who is **really** providing for you, you'll wake up one day like we did, and realize how foolish you were. Make your career about glorifying God and not yourself. See it as a part of His plan to meet your needs and glorify Him.

3. Don't let what you work on become your idol. While it's great to have a sense of accomplishment when you finish a house, fix a car, teach a class, or whatever you do, all of that should relate to a bigger goal. Your Bibles warn you about worshiping gods of wood, metal, and stone and while you may not have carved images, some people worship their houses of wood and stone, or cars of metal, or other things they've made or bought. It can even be trophies they've earned from their hobbies. Be careful not to let **anything** become more important, or more satisfying to you than God Himself. For when you do, you've built a tower He's going to have to knock down. What happens, God forbid, if you get laid off or injured and can't work? Does that mean you're any less valuable? By no means! Our identity is in God as His child, in Christ as His brother or sister, in His church as a redeemed believer with an eternal soul. Yes, work is important, jobs are important, but don't let your work or what you build or buy with your labor become your god.

4. Beware of pride. Which is what this is all about. We thought with this great temple, we were all that. We wanted to make a name for ourselves. And some of you may want to make a name for yourself at your work or wherever. Let's focus on making Jesus known instead of ourselves. Your Bible also tells you that, "Pride goes before destruction." And it surely did for us. We had all the latest inventions, technologies, and composites. This new way of building, bricks instead of natural stone-they were uniform and so much easier to lay and quicker to build with. And tar held them together so much better and longer. This tower would last forever and our great great great grandchildren would look at it and praise us for what we had done. Only today, no one knows exactly where our tower even was. There are lots of possibilities in modern Iraq but we don't know if any of them are really it. Some say that another great Babylonian leader named Nebuchadnezzar built another tower over top of ours many years later.

Of course there are pyramids in Egypt and Stonehenge in England and all kinds of structures all over the world, but any project that leaves God out is empty and hollow. If the builders of all of these structures didn't know and honor the one true God, they are in hell today. Suffering forever. Their work endures, but it too will one day burn up according to what your Bibles say. Anything you do that is not of God will burn one day. All material work will burn. That doesn't mean it doesn't serve a good purpose, but

it just puts things in perspective. Looking back all these thousands of years later, I wished I had used my time for things that will last. For eternal things. Building God's Kingdom by worshipping Him, telling others about Him, glorifying Him, praying to Him, these are the things that will last.

There's nothing wrong with buildings, structures, or towers themselves, nothing wrong with work. But be sure to work for the Lord. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." We found that out the hard way. Col 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." So your day to day work, if done for Jesus, is eternal, even if the things you actually work on will burn up. And Proverbs 16:3 says, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." Don't build without God! Don't work without God! In fact, instead of starting a job or a project and then asking God to bless it, ask God what He wants you to do and then do it and He will bless it!

Most importantly, on this Labor Day weekend, if you want to get to heaven, you can't work your way there. I noticed when the Scripture was read while ago that it said that even though we were building this tower to reach up to heaven, the God of heaven still had to come **down** to see it. You cannot build your own way to heaven. Not with good works, not with tall towers, not with hard labor. There's only one ladder that reaches to heaven, only one Gate to God and that's His Son, Jesus. Our Tower of Babel represents all the false religions on earth today which try to reach heaven by human effort with human labor. But Jesus already came to provide you with a bloodstained elevator that will take you directly into God's presence. If you've never accepted Him, do that today as we pray.