

Babel and the Scattering

WHAT WE FOUND

- The Table of Nations writes every people on earth, including many of Israel's future enemies (Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, Babylon, the Philistines), into one family tree. One origin, one blood: solidarity is a fact before it is a virtue (CCC 360–361), and racism is illiterate in Genesis.
- Babel's project has three moves, in its own words: a tower to heaven (self-ascent), a name for ourselves (self-naming), and a refusal to be scattered (self-gathering against God's blessing-command to fill the earth).
- The tower “with its top in the heavens” is so far from heaven that the LORD “came down” to see it. The judgment destroys no one: language is confused, pride's project stalls, and the nations disperse to fill the earth after all. Judgment and mercy in one act (CCC 57).
- Pentecost is Babel reversed: the Spirit comes down, and the reconvened nations, gathered “from every nation under heaven,” each hear the mighty works of God in their own tongue (Acts 2:5-11). God does not restore one language; He makes His praise at home in every language.
- The chapter ends by narrowing the line of Shem down to one man in Ur, married to a barren wife. The whole promise is about to hang on an impossibility.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *The City of God, XIV.28 and XVI.4*

Babel is the earthly city's signature project: proud unity organized around love of self. The study's gloss: the city of God is built in the opposite direction, God descending to dwell with the humble.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom · *Homilies on Genesis*

Even this judgment is medicinal: no one at Babel is destroyed. The confusion of tongues is a physician's intervention, breaking pride's fever without killing the patient.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory of Nazianzus · *Oration 41, On Pentecost*

Tongues once divided to break an evil harmony of pride; tongues are now distributed by the Spirit to build a holy harmony of faith: many languages, one confession.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Name your tower in one written sentence, and write beneath it what God has already promised that the tower is trying to fake.

- Pray this week for one nation your family does not come from; learn one fact about the Church there.
- At Mass on Sunday, hear the assembly's one voice as a foretaste of Zephaniah 3:9.
- Read Genesis 12–14; read 12:1–3 twice and bring an answer: what exactly has God promised this man?

MEMORY VERSE

“Yes, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.” (Zephaniah 3:9)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Genesis 12–14 before next session.

Catechism references: CCC 57, 60, 360–361, 731–732, 762.