



Why are there so many languages?

I've mentioned before that one of the assignments I give our confirmation students is to come to class with a question about something relating to God, the Bible or what we believe. The question above is one I received recently. I like this question, because so often we just think "That's the way it is," and don't bother asking "How did it get that way?" When you find out the "history" behind something it usually takes on a whole new meaning.

Not all questions the students come up with have easy answers. This one does. God gives us the answer in Genesis 11:

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

The people at Babel had the desire to exalt themselves instead of obeying God (in effect, they wanted to be god). They sought to make a monument to their own greatness. They wanted to stay in one place rather than obey God's command to Noah (9:1) to fill the earth. God saw their disobedient ambitions and knew the limitless wickedness and grief that would result (11:6) and in His grace introduced various new languages, so they would not be able to carry out their plans (11:7-8).

Thank God for the times He intervenes in our lives to keep us from going "whole hog" in the direction He has not planned for us!

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net