

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." (Gen 11:1-9)

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## INTRODUCTION

### A BRIEF SUMMARY OF OUR TEXT

At the time of our text, the social circumstances seemed to be ideal. It is the only time in the history of the world when the people were perfectly united and spoke the same language. Yet, so far as the record is concerned, neither individually nor together did they engage in a quest for God, which was the very reason for their very existence. As it is written, "And He made from one [common origin, one source, one blood] all nations of men to settle on the face of the earth, having definitely determined [their] allotted periods of time and the fixed boundaries of their habitation (their settlements, lands, and abodes) so that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your [own] poets have said, For we are also His offspring" (Acts 17:26-27, Amplified Bible).

Prior to this, the flood had occurred, with only eight people surviving that judgment – and that was by Divine calling, choice, and commission (Gen 6:14-22). At that time, there had been such a deterioration in humanity, that God determined to totally cleanse the earth. The flood concluded in this way: "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Gen 7:21-3).

This flood occurred about 1,656 years after creation. The calculations for determining this are as follow. They are only an estimation.

1 – God created everything – Gen 1-2,0,

- 2 – Adam fathered Seth at 130 – Gen 5:3 –  $0 + 130 = 130$  yrs
- 3 – Seth fathered Enos at 105 – Gen 5:6 –  $130 + 105 = 235$  yrs
- 4 – Enosh fathered Kenan at 90 – Gen 5:9 –  $235 + 90 = 325$  yrs
- 5 – Cainan fathered Mahalalel at 70 – Gen 5:12 –  $325 + 70 = 395$  yrs
- 6 – Mahalalel fathered Jared at 65 – Gen 5:15 –  $395 + 65 = 460$  yrs
- 7 – Jared fathered Enoch at 162 – Gen 5:18 –  $460 + 162 = 622$  yrs
- 8 – Enoch fathered Methuselah at 65 – Gen 5:21 –  $622 + 65 = 687$  yrs
- 9 – Methuselah fathered Lamech at 187 – Gen 5:25 –  $687 + 187 = 874$  yrs
- 10 – Lamech fathered Noah at 182 – Gen 5:28 –  $874 + 182 = 1056$  yrs
- 11 – The Flood – Noah was 600 – Gen 7:6 –  $1056 + 600 = 1656$  yrs

Instead of seeking the Lord, the people sought to make a name for themselves, particularly so they would not be “scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” Journeying together, the people came to the plain of Shinar, and it looked like a good place to settle down. Here they determined to build a city, and a tower that reached into heaven. Their project got the attention of God, and He “came down to see the city and the tower” that were being built. As impressive as it must have been, the work did not please the Lord. It was an effort to be independent, and had made no provision for God. The Lord then brought the work to an abrupt halt by confounding the language of the people, so they could not understand one another.

We do not know exactly when the events of our text took place. There is a hint, however, in something written of Peleg: "And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for IN HIS DAYS THE EARTH WAS DIVIDED; and his brother's name was Joktan " (Gen 10:25). It is assumed that the reference to the earth being “divided,” probably refers to the scattering that took place in our text. It is calculated Peleg’s life was between 1757 and 1996. This is calculated from the genealogy listed in Genesis 11:14-19. This is, of course, only an estimate.

The point is that sin had a devastating impact upon humanity – far greater, I fear, than most suppose. In the days of Noah the Divine assessment of humanity was, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). After the flood, in which all humanity except eight persons died, after Noah offered a sacrifice, the “LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (Gen 8:21). Humanity had not improved, even though it had a fresh start! The sin nature was a part of the human make-up, and only a new creation would resolve the matter!

## ASSESSING FAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

The proper assessment of favorable circumstances postulates knowing the reason for one’s existence. A person, or a group of people, who do not know the will of the Lord, cannot properly evaluate circumstances – whether they are favorable or unfavorable. It is quite possible for a person to give himself to vanity, thinking he is doing something profitable and self-fulfilling.

Our text is a sterling example of this type of choice and activity. It highlights the necessity of having a proper knowledge, and not being ignorant of the will of the Lord.

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## THE REVELATION GIVEN TO MOSES, #1

It is generally understood that Moses is the author of the first five books of Scripture, with Genesis being the first. This is largely based upon the use of the phrases "Moses and the Prophets" (Lk 16:29,31), "Moses and all the Prophets" (Lk 24:27; "Moses and in the Prophets" (Lk 24:44), "Moses in the Law and in the Prophets" (John 1:45); "the Prophets and Moses" (Acts 26:22), and "the law of Moses and out of the Prophets" (Acts 28:23). Jesus made an even finer distinction when He referred to three categories of revelation: "the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). These expressions are to be considered as references to the totality of the Scripture at that time. Also, when addressing the matter of the husband being the head of the wife, Paul refers to what the Law said – and the saying is found in Genesis (1 Cor 14:34; Gen 3:16). It is also written, "For the law was given by Moses" (John 1:17).

This being true, the amount of information divulged to Moses, and the length of time it covered (2,500 years), is most arresting. The writing of the book of Job is also attributed to Moses. No one has been able to dispute this successfully.

All of the above being true, ponder the magnitude of what was made known to Moses.

1. The creation (Gen 1-2)
2. The first mention of Satan (Gen 3:1; 2 Cor 11:3)
3. The first sin (Gen 3:1-24)
4. The first judgment of sin (Gen 3:13-24)
5. The first murder (Gen 4:1-9)
6. The record of Enoch (Gen 5:21-25)
7. The record of Noah (Gen 5:32-9:29)
8. The flood (Gen 6:5-8:14)
9. The populating of the earth after the flood (Gen 10:1-32; 11:10)
10. The origin of nations and languages (Gen 10:1-32)
11. The judgment at Babel (Gen 11:1-9)
12. The calling and life of Abraham (Gen 12:1-25:8)
13. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19)
14. The events associated with the birth of Isaac (Gen 17:15-19; 18:1-19; 21:1-5)
15. The lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12:1-49:33)

16. The life of Joseph (Gen 37:3-50:26)
17. The entrance of Abraham's progeny through Isaac into Egypt (Gen 46:3-8).
18. Israel's bondage and treatment in Egypt (Gen 15:13-14; Ex 1:8-12:40)
19. The fact that Israel would be delivered from Egypt, and the selection of Moses to lead them out (Gen 15:13-16; Ex 3:1-4:28)
20. Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Ex 12:17-15:22)
21. The giving of the Law with all of its commandments and ordinances (Ex 19:3-20:19; 32:1-35; 34:1-4)
22. The layout for the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 25:1-27:19; 30:1-7; 31:1-12)
23. The Tabernacle service (Ex 28:1-30:46)
24. The construction and setting up of the Tabernacle (Ex 31:1-11; 33:7-40:36)
25. Israel's wandering in the wilderness ( Numbers chapters 15-25, Deuteronomy 2:1- 3:11)
26. The life of Job (Job 1:1-42:17)

All of these occurred centuries before Moses. The fact that they were all revealed to Moses confirms that the people of God are intended to know, believe, and accept these things. Nothing that God reveals is non-essential.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Text for series: Genesis 11:1-9)

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## THE REVELATION GIVEN TO MOSES, #2

The exclusive work of God in the creation of "the heavens and the earth," and everything in them (Gen 1-2; 5:1-2), and His working during the first 2,500 years of the world were revealed to Moses. From the standpoint of volume, this is the most extensive revelation given by God to man. That revelation answers a multitude of questions with which men have become enamored. No individual who believes the Word of God has any right to even think about the mythical theory of evolution. It is unbelief that has moved men to speculate about the days of creation being periods of time. Their nonsense should not be heard or tolerated. Moses has told us of the origin of all matter – everything included in the terms "heavens and the earth," and everything in them (Ex 20:11; Psa 146:6; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24).

Concerning the creation, it is mentioned in the Law – the Ten Commandments – itself (Ex 20:11), and in the words Moses spoke to the people (Ex 31:17; Deut 4:32). It is mentioned in the days of Noah (Gen 6:7). This creation is mentioned in the Prophets (Isa 40:26; 42:5; 45:12,18; Jer 10:11-12). Jesus referred to the creation recorded in Genesis (Mk 10:6; Mk 13:19). References to the creation recorded by Moses are found in the apostolic writings (Rom 1:20; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; 2 Pet 3:4; Rev 4:11; 10:6). God is referred to as "the Creator" (Isa 40:28; 43:15; Rom 1:25; 1 Pet 4:19).

The necessity of understanding God as the Creator is seen in the fact that regeneration involves a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). The regenerated nature – "the new man" – is "created in

righteousness” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). God has also promised, ““For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:18). All of this postulates that what Moses recorded of the creation is the absolute truth – including what was created, and the time that was required to do so. In fact, the creation itself is evidence of the activity of The Creator. If men distort the fact of the creation, it ripples into the present time, militating against both faith and hope.

The recording of the creation is proof that the fact of the beginning of the heavens and the earth is ESSENTIAL knowledge, not optional theorizing. No person, regardless of their scholastic acumen, can think properly about God, Christ, the Law, regeneration, the resurrection, or the new heavens and earth apart from the account of the creation of the heavens, earth, and everything in them. Believers must be wholly intolerant of compromise on this point.

These things provide insight into what the Lord said about Moses. “And He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. MY SERVANT MOSES is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?” (Num 12:6-8). Anyone and everyone that accepts the theory of evolution to any degree, has denied what God said about Moses. They also present God as holding back on some essential details of creation. Consider the extensive exposure of Moses to the glory of God. Moses is the only man of record who asked to see that glory (Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-9) – and he saw it. That had an impact on what he wrote.

Moses’ name is mentioned 848 times in Scripture: 768 times from Exodus thru Malachi, 38 times in the Gospels, 19 times in Acts, and 23 times in Romans thru the Revelation. He is a key person in Scripture, and his writings cannot be ignored.

## THE POINT

The point is that God was very deliberate in making known matters relating to beginnings. He chose a faithful man to record these things because they are pivotal in our understanding of both God and man. This, in turn, is essential to a proper understanding of His great salvation, and everything associated with it. It confirms why a Savior was needed, and why He could not come from the stock of Adam. It confirms why salvation is “not of works,” by revealing the original fall and its effects upon the human race. When we see the beginnings correctly, we will have no difficulty with the fact of Divine initiative. God’s choices, predestination, election, etc. will be seen as expressions of His Godhood that are not to be questioned by men, whom He has created.

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Text for series (Gen 11:1-9)

This is a lengthy post including a relevant listing

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## FIRSTS FOUND IN GENESIS 11:1-9

1. First mention of God (Gen 1:1)
2. First circumstance of chaos and disorder (Gen 1:2)
3. First mention of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2)
4. First commandment (Gen 1:3)
5. First non-heavenly orderliness (Gen 1:4-10)
6. First Separation (Gen 1:4,7)
7. First Day and night (Gen 1:5)
8. First Terrestrial substance (Gen 1:10)
9. First Vegetative life (Gen 1:11-12)
10. First Celestial substance (Gen 1:16)
11. First sea-life (Gen 1:20-22)
12. First fowl (Gen 1:20)
13. First Animal life (Gen 1:24-25)
14. First language of plurality in the Godhead (Gen 1:26)
15. First Man (Gen 3:19)
16. First Warning (Gen 2:17)
17. First Display of human wisdom (Gen 2:19-20)
18. First Woman (Gen 2:21-22)
19. First Marriage (Gen 2:22-24)
20. First Exposure to Satan (Gen 3:1)
21. First Temptation (Gen 3:1-5)
22. First delusion (Gen 3:6)
23. First Sin (Gen 3:8)
24. First Knowledge of nakedness and its shame (Gen 3:7)
25. First Divine interrogation (Gen 3:9-13)
26. First Vicarious death (Gen 3:21)
27. First Divinely provided clothing (Gen 3:21)
28. First Promise (Gen 3:15)
29. First Curse among men (Gen 3:17)
30. First expulsion (Gen 3:23-24)
31. First Birth (Gen 4:1)
32. First Offering (Gen 4:3)
33. First accepted sacrifice (Gen 4:4)
34. First rejected sacrifice (Gen 4:5)
35. First human reaction to a rejected sacrifice (Gen 4:5)
36. First time a man became angry (Gen 4:5-6)
37. First Divine response to human anger (Gen 4:6-16)
38. First Murder (Gen 4:8)
39. First wanderer or vagabond (Gen 4:12)
40. First mark put on a man (Gen 4:15)
41. First man to go out from the presence of the Lord (Gen 4:16)
42. First city built (Gen 4:17)
43. First case of bigamy (Gen 4:19)
44. First instance of retaliation (Gen 4:23)

45. First human substitute (Gen 4:25)
46. First genealogy (Gen 5:1-32)
47. First unequal yoke (Gen 6:2)
48. First mention of the Spirit striving with men (Gen 6:3)
49. First reference to a society of ruthless men (Gen 6:4)
50. First reference to man's thoughts being corrupt (Gen 6:4).
51. First reference to God repenting (Gen 6:6).
52. First reference to a universal judgment (Gen 6:2).
53. First reference to a person finding grace (Gen 6:).
54. First reference to a man who was just and perfect in his generation (Gen 6:9).
55. First reference to the total corruption of humanity (Gen 6:12).
56. First reference to "the end of all flesh" (Gen 6:13).
57. First boat built (Gen 6:14-15).
58. First reference to a flood (Gen 6:17).
59. First Covenant made with a man (Gen 6:18).
60. First reference to someone being saved (Gen 6:18).
61. First reference to the gathering of animals (Gen 6:19-20).
62. First reference to the gathering and storage of food (Gen 6:21).
63. First reference to someone doing all that God had commanded (Gen 6:22).
64. The first person God affirmed He saw as "righteous" (Gen 7:1).
65. First record of someone being saved because of another (Gen 7:1).
66. First record of animals being saved (Gen 7:8).
67. First rain (Gen 7:12).
68. First and only universal flood (Gen 7:18-20).
69. First opening of the fountains in the earth (Gen 7:2,11).
70. First opening of the windows of heaven (Gen 7:11).
71. First destruction of every living substance (Gen 7:23).
72. First time God is said to have remembered someone (Gen 8:1).
73. First record of a drying wind (Gen 8:1).
74. First confirmation of newness of life following a curse (Gen 8:11).
75. First record of a deliverance (Gen 8:18-19)
76. First building of an altar (Gen 8:20).
77. First known sacrificial offering of multiple creatures (8:20).
78. First time God is said to have been pleased with an offering (Gen 8:21).
79. First promise of continued seedtime/harvest, summer/winter, day/night (Gen 8:22).
80. The first mention of animals fearing mankind (Gen 9:2).
81. The first addition to the human diet (Gen 9:3).
82. The first approval of eating meat (Gen 9:3-4).
83. The first prohibition of eating blood (Gen 9:4).
84. The first authorization of capital punishment (Gen 9:5-6).
85. The first covenant established with the seed of a principle person (Gen 9:9).
86. The first covenant with living creatures (Gen 9:10).
87. The first promise to never again cut off all living beings with a flood (Gen 9:11).
88. The first token of a covenant (Gen 9:12).
89. The first reference fo a rainbow (Gen 9:13-17).
90. The first reference to God remembering a covenant He made (Gen 9:15-16).

91. The first reference to a husbandman (Gen 9:20).
92. The first reference to a vineyard (Gen 9:20).
93. The first reference to wine (Gen 9:21).
94. The first reference to a person becoming drunk (Gen 9:21).
95. The first curse uttered by a man (Gen 9:25).
96. The first blessing uttered by a man (Gen 9:26).
97. The first reference to a servant (Gen 9:25-26).
98. The first reference to the enlargement of one's territory (Gen 9:27).
99. The first mention of the "Gentiles" (10:5).
100. The first mention of "nations" (10:5).
101. The first mention of "families," tribes, or classes of people (10:5,18-20,31,32).
102. The first mention of "isles," or maritime countries (10:5).
103. First mention of a hunter (Gen 10:9).
104. First mention of a kingdom (10:10).
105. First mention of Babel (Gen 10:10).
106. First mention of Nineveh (Gen 10-:12).
107. First mention of Canaanites (Gen 10:18).
108. First mention of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 10:19).
109. First mention of "tongues," or languages (Gen 10:5,20,31).
110. The first mention of different nations "divided in the earth" (Gen 10:32).
111. The first mention of a group of people traveling (Gen 11:2).
112. The first example of agreement among men (Gen 11:3).
113. The first mention of "brick" (11:3).
114. The first mention of "mortar" (Gal 11:3).
115. The first mention of the tempering of brick (11:3)
116. The first mention of a "tower" (11:4).
117. The first mention of a fear of being "scattered" (11:4).
118. The first mention of the Lord coming "down" (11:5).
119. The first record of God's assessment of a collective work (11:5-6).
120. The first record of God's response to a collective work (11:6-7).
121. The first record of God scattering a people (11:8).

The broad scope of the matters introduced in the book of Genesis acquaint us with the marvelous dimensions of God's "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3). It involves the activities of God, the exalted Christ, holy angels, men, the devil, demons, and the devil's angels. So far as humanity is concerned, there are individuals, families, nations, and the world as a whole. There are blessings and cursings, Divine selections and rejections. There are the matters of believing, obedience, and godly works. There are sacrifices and choices (both human and Divine). We behold both God's patience and His intolerance. There is both the responsiveness and the lack of responsiveness in men. The necessity of a word from God is seen, as well as the power of that word. We partake of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) to provide for what He has made, as well as making demands of what He has created. The entire creation, both animate and inanimate, personal and impersonal, individual and collective, is all orderly. Whatever God does is void of chaos and disorder. All of this is introduced in Genesis, developed by Moses and the Prophets, and perfected in Christ Jesus.

– Given O. Blakely



## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 5 of 39

### ONE LANGUAGE

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all ONE LANGUAGE; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Verse 6, Gen 11:1-9)

Just as the circumstances and environment in “the beginning” of all things (Gen 1-2) cannot be favorably compared with current conditions, so the fresh beginning with the progeny of the sons of Noah is far superior to the paralleled environment of our time. This text will also confirm that the fact of moral degeneration was not eradicated by the flood. Although all of Cain’s generation was removed, the spirit of it was not.

Noah was of the generation of Seth, as was the Lord Jesus Himself, according to the flesh (Lk 3:23-38). This means that Seth’s generation is the only one existent after the flood. SETH begat Enos (Gen 4:26), ENOS begat Cainan (Gen 5:9), CAINAN begat Mahalaleel (Gen 5:12), MAHALALEEL begat Jared (Gen 5:15), JARED begat Enoch (Gen 5:18), ENOCH begat Methuselah (Gen 5:21), METHUSELAH begat Lamech (Gen 5:25), and "And LAMECH lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: And he called his name NOAH, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed" (Gen 5:28-29).

Since the fall of man, one of the consistent marks of humanity has been the degeneracy of people who are grouped together. They may have started out united, and speaking alike, but before long their self-interests, as distinguished from godly ones, led to the destruction of that unity. This was true of the people after the flood, the formation of the Jewish nation, and the beginning of the church. In every case, the people were united at the first, but became fractured in time.

In each case, sufficient resources were present to avoid the deterioration. Continual recourse to God was something for which man was made, yet it has never taken place when men lived being dominated by the environment that includes “the bondage of corruption.”

I have lived to participate in at least two spiritual renewals – one in Indiana, and one in Missouri. In both of these renewals, there were very few participants at the first. It then spread rather rapidly over a relatively brief period of time. There was a marked increase in the “knowledge of God,” Christ the Savior, the Holy Spirit, and the salvation of God. The church was seen from a higher level, there was insight concerning Divine provisions for being godly, as well as the coming of the Lord. All of this almost seemed as though it caught the devil unawares, but he eventually increased his efforts to cause dissension and enmity within the church itself. All of those involved in these renewals saw the efforts of the wicked one, and set out to resist him. We all found that our renewal had made us both stronger and wiser. This increase, we found, was owing to the benefits of salvation itself, not our own wisdom or determination.

What occurred at Babel, within Israel, and within the church, confirms that men were not made to permanently inhabit a temporal environment, or to remain separate from their God. No matter what fresh beginning is realized, if the individual or group does not live with a higher motivation than “this present evil world,” that beginning will not be sustained. For example, if our objective is to achieve unity, it is destined to failure, which history has confirmed. In fact, the account we are reviewing in this series of devotions began with the people being perfectly united – in one accord. God Himself observed, “Behold, the people is one, and they all have one language.” Other versions read, “one people speaking the same language” (NIV), “The people are united, and they all speak the same language” (NLT). Historically, God is never again depicted as saying these words. It appears that the single exception is that of all believers at the commencement of the church. They were “of one heart and of one soul,” and were “all with one accord” (Acts 4:32; 5:12). Until this very day, that circumstance has never been duplicated – all of the people being “one,” or perfectly united, and speaking the same language. This unfortunate condition is in spite of the solemn exhortation to the saints, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10).

“ONE LANGUAGE” – what a remarkable circumstance! “One language” means everyone expressed themselves in the same way, and in the same language. Etymology and linguistics did not exist, for multiple languages is what drives both of those analytical methods. Over and above the matter of communicating with one another, God has promised He is going to “restore to the peoples A PURE LANGUAGE, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.” (Zeph 3:9). Notice the twofold purpose of “a pure language” – calling upon the name of the Lord, and serving Him with one accord. Until then, each professing Christian sect has its own language –its own way of speaking of the things of God. That is the only way to maintain a sect, or denomination. Our text will confirm that if the intentions of the people are wrong, their speech cannot possibly be right.

Now, we are introduced to the first revealed example of perfect unity, and of God’s reaction to it.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Verse 1, Gen 11:1-9)

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## THE WHOLE EARTH

“And the whole earth . . .” Other versions read, “the whole world” (GWN), “All the people” (NLT), “all mankind” (LIVING), “everyone” (CEV), “the people of the whole world” (GNB).

The word “earth” has the following basic lexical meaning: “land, earth, whole earth (as opposed to a part); earth (as opposed to heaven)” (STRONG’S ).

Yet here, the stress is obviously not the earth itself, but what took place within it. The physical environment was not the point, but its intended occupants. This text is not speaking of humanity

and nature being in accord, as some spiritists teach, so that a constant communication was going on between man and nature.

This point may seem to be rather elementary, but something is to be seen in it. The Scriptures teach us that men came to the point where they worshiped and served nature rather than the God of nature. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 1:21-25).

Right here we once again come to grips with the revealed proper vocation of man: seeking and finding God, in order to worship and serve Him (Acts 17:26-27). Throughout Scripture it is again and again confirmed that the awareness of this intended quest was lost in the fall of man. This is precisely what caused sin to dominate the human race on every level. Sin made man fundamentally self-centered, throwing him out of his proper spiritual orbit. That was what the initial temptation was designed to do, and that is what it did.

We are living in a time when much is being made of the natural environment. Men are being charged with damaging that environment by their carelessness, and thus jeopardizing mankind in general, and the earth in particular. When God speaks of those who “destroy the earth” (Rev 11:18), He is not speaking of our natural environment, but of a moral destruction which provokes God to initiate corruption, or desolation. Thus Canaan, once lush with vegetation and fruitfulness (Num 13:27; Deut 8:7-10; 11:12; Jer 2:7), became a waste place (Lev 26:30-32; Isa 1:7; 13:9; Jer 4:27). It was all because of Israel’s sin.

However, we are not hearing much about the pollution that has resulted from man’s preference of self. Man cannot destroy what God has created. However, continual sin will bring judgment from Him that may very well effect the earth itself. Further, those who are championing the quest to clean up the natural environment are strangely silent about coming to grips with the spiritual pollution that is leading men to perdition. They can get very animated about the natural realm, but remain completely indifferent to the spiritual one. They are wrong in their emphasis, and the text before us confirms it!

Thus we are now presented with a view of the earth that concentrates on humanity, for whom the earth was made. What is now described took place in the environment created as a stage on which the drama of redemption would be played out.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 7 of 39

ONE LANGUAGE

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, "had one language" (NKJV), "used the same language" (NASB), "one tongue" (DOUAY), "one lip" (SEPTUAGINT), "one pronunciation" (YLT), "a single language" (LIVING), and "one language and one mode accent" (AMPLIFIED).

This is a circumstance that we can scarcely imagine – but it was a very real condition. No name is given to the language, for in our text the original common language itself was lost.

The text teaches us that nature itself did not drive the development of different languages. This was not the result of human preference, or an effort to develop some kind of cultural distinction.

As will be stressed in the next clause, the text addresses something that is spoken, not something that was written.

There was one means of communication, and it was consistent, with no variations.

#### AND OF ONE SPEECH

". . .and of one speech." Other versions read, "the same words" (NKJV), "Common speech" (NIV), "few words" (RSV), "one tongue" (BBE), "a common vocabulary" (GWN), "one voice" (ABP), and "one accent and mode of expression" (AMPLIFIED).

There were no peculiar accents, different ways to pronounce words, or different meanings for the same words. Some versions accent the fewness of the words themselves – "few words" (RSV). This does not speak of a largely undeveloped language reflecting only a few concepts. In our time, a considerable percentage of the English vocabulary is nothing more than an adaptation to another language. When one language does not contain words denoting the concepts of another language, new words are created to accommodate that language. Thus we have the literary phenomenon of transliteration. The more people understand each other, the less need there is for special words.

#### WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS CIRCUMSTANCE?

Nothing in Scripture should be passed over as though it was incidental, or had nothing that our understanding requires.

If language came from God, at this point He had given only one, which should acquaint us with Divine preference. For men to work together successfully, enjoying harmony and productivity, it is best to have the same language – a language that does not reflect human preferences and distinctions, but rather reflects reality.

There is a remarkable phenomenon that exists in modern Christianity. Take the matter of versions of the Scriptures themselves. I personally have sixty-four different versions – and there are considerably more available than that. These versions do not sound the same, do not say the same things, and often contradict each other. I have noted that as society degenerates, there are

concerted efforts to adapt the Scriptures to that generation, offering it a fresh translation. In Christendom, even when reading Scripture, there is not “one language” or “one speech.” Fanciful arguments are presented to justify this situation, but they have not yielded improvement in the spiritual status of people. The erroneous postulate is that language has actually improved, and is more precise – therefore a Bible that reflects these imagined improvements is presented to the people. Yet, in spite of these imagined improvements, there is an even greater ignorance of God, Christ, and the Scriptures themselves. In the world of Christians, people are not speaking the same thing – even when they quote Scripture. That is not the way God created man, or sustains the whole of humanity. Different ways of speaking were the result of a curse, not a blessing.

In our text, we will find that God did not want this self-centered project of building a city and a tower to continue. Therefore, He will render an appropriate judgment that will guarantee the cessation of the work. He will confuse the speech of the people. I suspect that this is actually what has happened in our time.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

### THE APPOINTED OUTCOME

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Verse 1, Gen 11:1-9)

### Lesson 8 of 39

In the salvation of God, the matter of “speech” is addressed. This is known through both the Prophets and the Apostles.

Through Zephaniah God declared what HE WAS GOING TO DO: “For then will I turn to the people a pure A PURE LANGUAGE” (Zeph 3:9). Other versions read “I will restore to the peoples a pure language” (NKJV), “I will give to the peoples purified lips” (NASB), “Then will I purify the lips of the peoples” (NIV), “I will; change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech” (NRSV), “a clean language” (BBE), “I will change the peoples, so they will have pure lips” (CJB), “I will restore to the people a chosen” (DOUAY), “I will give all people pure lips” (GWN), “I will then enable the nations to give me acceptable praise” (NET), “I shall purge the lips of the peoples” (NJB), “I will change people from other nations so that they can speak the language clearly” (ERV), “returning people to pure Hebrew” (LIVING), “I’ll give them a language undistorted, unpolluted” (MESSAGE), and “then [changing their impure language] I will give to the people a clear and pure speech from pure lips” (AMPLIFIED).

### THE PURPOSE FOR THE CHANGE

This change of language was not something God was going to do among the Israelites, but among the peoples of the world. The purpose for it is spelled out by the Lord.

1. “That they may call upon the name of the Lord.” Other versions read, “make prayer to the Lord” (BBE), “invoke the Lord’s name when they pray” (NJB), “call upon the name of Jehovah”

(YLT), “will pray to me alone” (GNB), and “Words to address GOD in worship” (MESSAGE).

2. “To serve Him, with one consent.” Other versions read, “serve Him with one accord” (NKJV), “serve Him shoulder to shoulder” (NASB), “be His servants with one mind” (BBE), “serve Him with a single purpose” (CSB), “serve Him under one yoke” (SEPTUAGINT), “worship Him in unison” (NET), “worship the Lord together” (NLT), “they shall all obey Me” (GNB), “serve Me with their shoulders to the wheel” (MESSAGE), and “to serve Him with one unanimous consent and one united shoulder [bearing the yoke of the Lord” (AMPLIFIED).

When God begins something, it is not with a multiplicity of languages. If it is argued that on the day of Pentecost differing languages were involved, it must be remembered that this was an obstacle addressed by the Holy Spirit. The message was not tailored for the language, but the language was tailored for the message. In that case, everyone heard precisely the same message. Ordinarily, this would not have been possible. If men would have had the control of speaking in other languages, everyone would not have understood the same thing. Differing dialects and manners of expression would have hindered the conveyance of the message to the people. Any translator will tell you that there are great obstacles when moving the Word of God from one language to another, and considerable effort is involved in overcoming that circumstance.

It ought to be noted that language does play a significant role in unity. That is precisely why believers are admonished to “speak the same thing” (1 Cor 1:10). If a message is delivered that cannot be understood, it has no profit to the hearer.

One of the marks of the salvation of God is one language, as foretold by Zephaniah. This was not an etymological consideration, but one of understanding and profitable communication. It does not have to do with mundane conversation, but with a vocabulary that encapsulates the revealed thoughts of God. Key words must be common, having the same meanings. Central experiences or identities must be consistent in their representation, and that representation must reflect the mind and purpose of the Lord.

When it comes to the Word of God, it is questionable whether or not it is right for each individual to have a preference for how God’s Word is stated, and how correct it is for men to present the Christian populace with alternative versions. I realize that this can lead to unprofitable dialog and questionable conclusions. In this matter there are more questions than there are answers. However, I am questioning the propriety of continually upgrading Scripture in any language to agree with the nomenclature of the times – particularly when the times are marked by spiritual degeneration.

My aim is not to establish some inviolable rule. Rather, it is to underscore that a multiplicity of expressions for the same thing may not be as profitable as some have thought. It is also to emphasize that God has addressed the matter of speaking the same thing, and having an understanding of what we are saying to one another. If the Scriptures are considered to be the basis of spiritual communication, what reason can be put forward for altering them? What shall we do with Zephaniah’s prophecy?

Can it be that the plethora of Bible Versions is God confounding the people because of their

distance from Him? If some say these versions make things more plain, then why are professing Christians more obtuse concerning the Scriptures? This is certainly a touchy subject, but it should not be so.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 9 of 39

## WHY BRING THIS UP?

The present state of the church, or what claims to be the church, is deplorable. A.J. Boyd write, "There are about 41,000 different Christian denominations in five major 'families' of churches/communion." The Center for the Study of Global Christianity agrees that the number is 41,000. The website "NumberOfNet.com" says, "There are about 34,000 different Christian groups in the world since AD 30. This is according to the World Christian Encyclopedia published in 2001. 1,200 different Christian denominations exist in the United States alone." The World Christian Encyclopedia says the number is 33,000.

The church is in the same condition as the people who were divided at Babel! Even though the whole church, from the its beginning, was admonished to have NO divisions (1 Cor 1:10), and to avoid those who CAUSE divisions (Rom 16:17), they exist anyway. Where divisions in the church exist, it is affirmed that the people are "carnal, and walk as men" (1 Cor 3:3) – a posture that by no means is acceptable to God.

I have brought up this matter because of the remarkable parallel between this text and the present state of the professing church. We have a situation where professing Christians do not understand each other, and consequently the ordained "building up" of one another appears to have come to a grinding halt. Building one another up is not even a common practice in the individual divisions and congregations.

If this is a proper assessment, it puts this passage in a whole new light. There are matters here that shed some light on present day circumstances, and we do well to give heed to them. This all posits that the flesh is unchanged. Just as God caused the people to be divided because of their carnal ambition, it appears that this is what has happened in the church. There came a time in history – around 300 A.D. when the church was institutionalized. It was similar to attempting to build a tower of imagined safety. **a SPECIAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WAS FORMED THAT DIFFERED GREATLY FROM WHAT God had given:** "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers" (Eph 4:11). With very few exceptions, this form of the church dominated, existing for over a thousand years. During that time. The knowledge of the Scriptures was practically extinct, as the beastly product of human ingenuity ruled. When some of the faithful broke loose from the grip of institutionalism, a startling proliferation of Christian sects began, and continues to increase until this very day.

What has caused this condition? Why is there a lack of harmony, and an absence of unity. Why is there such an arresting presence of division? Sometimes, as at Corinth, it is even at a local level. May I suggest to you that this is nothing less than a Divine judgment. It is God who ultimately divides, even as He did in the plain of Shinar. There exist ignoble purposes in the professed Christian community. There are some who are building religion empires, and others who are sustaining them. As I see it, God has confused the speech of the people so they cannot understand one another. In Christendom as a whole, there is no agreement on things like faith, salvation, the Law, the main thing, the death of Christ, the present reign and activity of Christ, the second coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the work of the Spirit, the purpose of the church, the love of God, the love of the brethren, security in Christ, and the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. There is also disagreement on the creation, Israel, and various prophecies. In fact there may very well be a condition where there is absolute disagreement on everything God has affirmed to believers.

It is my persuasion that God has dispersed the people, for if, in their present condition, they were united, it could be said of them, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen 11:6) – and there are some plans God does not want to be implemented.

Now, there is something to think about.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 10 of 39

### THEY FOUND A PLAIN

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." (Verse 2, Gen 11:1-9)

There is no specific time period identified in this record. However long the period was from the exit from the ark until the events of this text, we have no accurate idea. We assume that it was a relatively significant period of time because of the obvious increase in population.

There are occasions in Scripture when time is of special significance–i.e.

1. The time Noah and his family entered the ark (Gen 7:13) – “selfsame day.”
2. When Isaac was born (Gen 17:21)– “set time.”
3. When the plagues brought upon Egypt (Ex 9:5)– “a set time” (Ex 9:5).
4. The time of Israel’s deliverance (Ex 12:41,51)–“selfsame day.”
5. The days of man upon earth– (Job 7:1; 14:14)“an appointed time.”
6. Hosea’s vision of the punishment of Israel (Hosea 2:3)–“an appointed time.”
7. The duration of the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron 36:2; Jer 25:11,12) – “seventy years.”
8. When the Babylonian captivity ended (Jer 9:10; Dan 9:2)– “that He would accomplish the seventy years”
9. A time when the saints will possess the kingdom (Dan 7:32)– “the time came.”



10. The birth of Jesus (Gal 4:4)– “the fulness of the time.”
11. The day of Pentecost, when the New Covenant was inaugurated (Acts 2:1)– “was fully come.”
12. The time to have mercy on Zion (Psa 10:13)– “the set time.”

In the Scriptures there are certain epochs that particularly relate to what God is doing. There are also special Satanic initiatives designed to counter what the Lord is doing. A proper understanding of these epochs is, in my judgment, essential to the formation of the overall discernment of the Scriptures, God, Christ, and salvation that is in Him with eternal glory (2 Tim 2:10) – to which “eternal glory” we have been called (1 Pet 5:10).

The spiritual epochs, for example, that followed the entrance of sin and death into the world reveals how God has chosen to address that entrance. They also reveal the propensities of sinful man, and how the Lord does not allow those tendencies to interfere with what He is doing.

If we fail to read this account with these things in mind, we will tend to gloss it, thereby missing its benefits. Our text identifies a particular time that stands as a monument to human folly and Divine wisdom. Human propensities are seen, and God’s response to them is made quite clear. We see that God is prone to interrupt things of which He does not approve. We see that men can unite in a flawless and unified manner, yet be total wrong in what they intend to do. God can make people speak differently. He can cause division, make men disperse, and go in different directions.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 11 of 39

### AS THEY JOURNEYED FROM THE EAST

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed FROM THE EAST, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." (Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, “journeyed east” (NASB), “moved eastward” (NIV), “migrated from the east” (NRSV), “spread eastward” (LIVING), “from the east” (ABP), “wandering from the east” (BBE), “removed from the east” (DOUAY), “migrating in the east” (NAB), and “moved eastward” (NIB).

Here again, the disadvantage of a multiplicity of versions becomes evident. The following are examples of the variations.

1. “migrated from the east” (NRSV/RSV/CSB/TNK/NET/NIB)
2. “moved eastward” (NIV)
3. “wandering from the east” (BBE)
4. “removed from the east” (DOUAY)

5. “journeyed east” (ERV/JPS/NAU)
6. “wandered about in the east” (GNB)
7. “traveled from the east” (CJB)
8. “journeyed from the east” (KJV/NKJV/DARBY/ ESV/RWB/WEB/YLT/ABP)
9. “went from the east” (GENEVA)
10. “moved from the east” (SEPTUAGINT,CEV)
11. “migrating in the east” (NAB)
12. “moved eastwards” (NJB)
13. “migrated to the east” (NLT)
14. “pulled up stakes from the east” (LITV)
15. “moved out of the east” (MESSAGE)

Asia and India are to the east of Shinar. If that is the “east” of reference,” then the people had already wandered into those areas, and backtracked to Shinar. If the point of reference is where the ark landed (Ararat), then Shinar itself is eastward, and the people had been moving in an eastwardly direction.

I take it that the point of reference is where the ark landed. As the population began to grow, they moved in an eastward direction, establishing the cities of Nineveh, Caiah, Acad, and Caineh, which were between Ararat and Shinar.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EAST

The east is significant in the Scriptures, being mentioned 157 times.

1. One of the rivers of Eden, Hiddekel, flowed “toward the east of Assyria” (Gen 2:14).
2. The cherubims that blocked the way to the tree of life were positioned “at the east of the Garden” (Gen 3:24).
3. When Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord,” he dwelt “on the east of Eden” (Gen 4:16).
4. When Lot separated from Abraham, he “journeyed east” (Gen 14:11).
5. When Abraham sent “the sons of the concubines” out of his house, he sent them to “the east country” (Gen 25:6).
6. Jacob encountered “the people of the east” (Gen 29:1).
7. Solomon’s wisdom is said to have excelled “all the children of the east country” (1 Kgs 4:30).
8. Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as “a man from the east” (Isa 41:2), and “a ravenous bird from the east” (Isa 46:11).

Ultimately, in this, the then future land of Israel was the fundamental land, and the location of other nations was in relation to their land. This is explained more fully in Moses’ statement, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when HE separated the sons of Adam, HE set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut 32:8).

There are certain Divine priorities revealed in Scripture, and they are present in everything God is said to be doing. At the heart of it all is God’s “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11) – something that is

not made known in the book of Genesis – or anything written by Moses and the Prophets. Yet, though unrevealed, it was at the heart of what God was working in the periods of time covered in Genesis. It is what moved God to create the heavens and the earth. It was the ultimate motivation in casting Adam and Eve out of the Garden. It dictated the judgment of the flood, and the distribution of the people following the flood. It is what moved God to call Abraham, developing a nation through him that would receive Jesus into the world – an environment in which He would be cultured as a boy, minister as a man, and ultimately lay down His life, to take it up again.

In our text, God was setting the stage for the development of the Jewish nation, their land, and the coming of the Messiah – fulfilling the word that would be written centuries later by Moses. "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided all mankind, He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance." (Deut 32:8-9, NIV)

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 12 of 39

### OTHER CENTRALITIES

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there" (Verse 1, Gen 11:1-9). In this entire episode, the will of the people was the heart of their thinking and doing.

The purpose of God is implemented within the framework of other centralities – all of which are within the perimeter of His purpose.

1. God's eternal purpose: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph 3:10-11)
2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 3:11). Everything in God's purpose revolves around His only begotten Son. He is the One who will do the required foundational work. He is the One who will sustain the work, and bring it to its intended conclusion.
3. The means through which Jesus works is His church – which is called "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:23).
4. The Israelites are the next consideration. "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom 9:4-5). The tutoring Law of God will come through them. The promises of God will be spoken to them. They will provide an example of how God works with a group of people. They are the people through whom the Savior will come into the world.
5. Canaan, the land of promise forms the last circumference. This is the land which, by Divine

covenant, was given to Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 17:6; 24:7; 26:3; 28:4; 28:13; 35:12). This land is called “the land of Israel” (1 Sam 13:19), “the land of the Hebrews” (Gen 40:15), “the land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39), “the land of promise” (Heb 11:9), “the holy land” (Zech 2:21), “the Lord’s land” (Hos 9:3), “Immanuel’s land” (Isa 8:8), and “His land” (Deut 32:43; Psa 10:16; Ezek 36:20; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16). God refers to it as “My land” (2 Chron 7:20; Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7; 16:18; Ezek 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6; 3:2).

The selection of this land for His own, and for His people makes it the central land in Scripture. Direction is established from the point of Canaan, whether north, east, south, or west.

The same is true of Jerusalem. Its elevation, and the fact that God placed His name there (2 Chron 33:7). The direction from anyplace in the world to Jerusalem is “up” (e.g. 1 Kgs 12:28; Ezra 1:3; Matt 20:17; Acts 11:2; Gal 1:17); and a departure from Jerusalem to any other place was “down” (Mk 3:22; Acts 8:26; 25:7).

Even in Genesis, the land of Israel is the point from which direction is determined, whether north, south, east, or west. This establishes the truth that the most important place is where God is working with His people – the place where it is more possible to think correctly, with the Lord at the center of our thoughts. Other places may be visited, but they are not to be our preferred dwelling place. However, in the case of the people in the plain of Shinar, God was totally absent from their thoughts.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 13 of 39

### A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there."  
(Verse 1, Gen 11:1-9)

Those who seek to please God must learn to reason from the proper starting point. If, for example, they begin their thinking and planning with pleasing themselves in mind, they are starting at the wrong point. Whatever they do, they will end up in the wrong place – alienated from God, and seeking to do the wrong thing. History is cluttered with failed “Christian” plans – purposes adopted by professing Christians that never matured, and were finally abandoned. Some of those involved in such plans, though once united, have dispersed, and some have completely withdrawn from what they perceived to be the work of the Lord. This type of failure has noticeably existed since about 300 A.D.

### WHY ARE MEN GENERALLY IGNORANT OF THE FACT AND PREEMINENCE OF GOD’S PURPOSE?

Why is it necessary to say these things? Once a person sees this, it may appear absurd that men remain so abysmally ignorant of the role of Divine PURPOSE in everything. It is what God

desires that counts, not the personal objectives of men. Today men are even being taught that God wants them to realize the fulfillment of their dreams. Thanks to the media-ministers this kind of language has become popular, and is being accepted. It appears that the Christian populace as a whole does not know what God has purposed. There is a reason for this circumstance.

When sin entered the world, mankind became ignorant of God. This is owing to at least two factors.

1. Bludgeoned with guilt, men do not draw near to God. They will not come to the light. Yet, desiring to be religious in some way, men create their own ideas of God – a god that will allow them to remain at a distance, and makes no moral demands of them.
2. Second, God withdraws from men, hiding Himself behind the cloud of the visible (Deut 31:17; Isa 45:15; Ezek 39:19). The combination of these two things make it IMPOSSIBLE for men to find God, unless He makes Himself known to them.

For these reasons, in the Genesis-record (Gen 11:1-9) what we now encounter reveals no pressing interest in God Himself. At that point in human history men were self-centered, and proceeded in life just as though there was no God at all. This is after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, which obviously became known. There was also the cursing of Cain, which must have been made known. There was a time when a consciousness of God surfaced, when, during the days of Enos the son of Seth, men “began to call on the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26). There was also the flood, in which the entirety of the human race saving for Noah and his family were destroyed. Yet, even a cursory view of our text will confirm that the people had no thoughts of God, but were completely absorbed in their own plans, imagining they were capable of protecting themselves and succeeding in whatever they attempted.

God had hid Himself from the people, and they could not think or act with Him in mind. They imagined they were masters of their own lives, and together could prove to be invincible.

The time of our text depicts humanity much as they are in this very day, with very few exceptions; although God warned “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psa 20:7). The chosen people, Israel, were solemnly told, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!” (Isa 31:1). God addressed the matter of the Egyptians, who appeared to be the strongest nation in the earth at that time: “Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out His hand, both He that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together” (Isa 31:3). Not only were these words delivered, but they were clearly demonstrated in history, as the ancient powers all collapsed, regardless of their seeming strength.

And what have we today, in spite of all of this revelation. We have nations trusting in their strength, or the combined strength of others. We are living in a nation that passes laws and developed norms that contradict the written revelation of God. Heathen religion has been imported and is flourishing in our nation. Laws are being passed that make it illegal to conclude

prayers in the name of Jesus.

What does all of this indicate? Who is the wise man that can diagnose this situation without getting caught up in it himself? All of this is a sign of Divine abandonment – just as it was in the Gentile world of old. "Wherefore God also GAVE THEM UP to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves . . . "For this cause God GAVE THEM UP unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God GAVE THEM OVER to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient [proper, NASB]" (Rom 1:24,26,28).

Through the prophet Hosea God once said to Israel, "ye are NOT My people, and I will NOT be your God" (Hosea 1:9). Men may speak of depressions, recessions, and economic failure, but consider the indictment of God against Israel: "I HAVE FORSAKEN Mine house, I HAVE LEFT Mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul INTO THE HAND OF HER ENEMIES. Mine heritage is unto Me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against Me: therefore have I HATED IT. Mine heritage is unto Me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. MANY PASTORS have destroyed My vineyard, they have trodden My portion under foot, they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto Me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace" (Jer 12:9-12).

As Paul said elsewhere about the experiences of Israel, "Now all these things HAPPENED unto them for ensamples: an they ARE WRITTEN for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11).

Who cannot see it! It is time for the churches to rise from the ashes of carnality, separate themselves, and "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord" (2 Cor 7:1). If God is not the Builder, He will be the Destroyer (Ex 12:23; 1 Cor 10:10)!

#### A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." (Verse 2, Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 14 of 39

#### THEY FOUND A PLAIN, #2

“. . . that they found a plain in the land of Shinar . . ." Other versions read, "they came upon a valley," <sup>NAB</sup> and "a level valley." <sup>LITV</sup>

We do not know how long the people had been traveling, but it is apparent their travels had wearied them. Having found a "plain," that is, a valley lying between mountains, they calculated

it was time to stop. We do not know if the valley was fertile, with many fruits all around. It is quite possible that it was, appearing to be self-sustaining.

## THEY DWELT THERE

“ . . . and they dwelt there.” Other versions read, “settled there” (NIV), “there they made their living place” (BBE), “there they abode” (GENEVA), “and soon thickly populated” (LIVING), “settled in Babylonia” (CEV), “settled down” (MESSAGE), and “they settled and dwelt there” (AMPLIFIED).

The suggestion of the text, is that the entire human race was involved, and not a mere segment of it. Considering the mandate given to Noah and his sons, the whole race settling in one place was not a proper thing: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and REPLENISH THE EARTH" (Gen 9:1). That is the same commission delivered to Adam (Gen 1:28). Considering the ultimate objective of God to garner a people “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9), the whole race settling in one place was not the right thing to do.

Of course, the latter purpose had not yet been revealed. It might therefore be argued that the people had no alternative but to think differently. However, it seems to me there is a different way to view this situation. This confirms the people were fundamentally UNLIKE God, and therefore their thoughts were CONTRARY to His. This confirms the truth of God’s assessment of humanity immediate following the flood: "And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (Gen 8:21).

If this seems unreasonable, consider how Abraham thought. “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For HE LOOKED FOR A CITY which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:9-10). Again, it is said of his progeny, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS IN THE EARTH. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire A BETTER COUNTRY that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:13-16). It requires some immediate involvement with the God of heaven to produce such an attitude – confessing they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly. That is the kind of perspective and longing of those who have really walked with God!

Where is it written that God ever spoke to Abraham of a city that He Himself had built? Or that the earth was not the ultimate inheritance reserved for him? When were the immediate offspring of Abraham told of a “better country, that is an heavenly” country. No such testimony is recorded in God’s dealing with Abraham. However, involvement with the God of heaven brings one to such conclusions.

There is no evidence that such revelations were vouchsafed to those blessed saints before Christ. And yet, during their tenure in the world, they sensed there was more than was seen, and they longed for something concerning which they had no details. The near-total lack of this kind of thinking confirms there is a vast distance between many professing Christians and God.

All of this flowed from their acquaintance with God, even though it was comparatively abbreviated. It appears as though it was more intuitive than cognitive. However, that is a kingdom characteristic more fully developed in Christ Jesus. It is referred to in this manner: "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:14).

Although it is not developed in this text, the fundamental lack of awareness of the living God is made known. There had been a noticeable degeneration from the faith possessed by Noah and his sons.

Already the race violated Divine intention – which was to populate the whole earth (Gen 9:1; Acts 17:26-27). They ceased to move toward the fulfillment of that objective, and sought to settle down. They did not know – as it is in the spiritual realm, so it is in the fleshly realm – idleness is the mother of decline.

Although some people had been destined to be nomadic (Cain and his generation – Gen 4:12), man was not made to be a wanderer or a vagabond. Once he found his place, his search was to end. This is why Abraham and his faithful descendants considered their possession to be other than in this present evil world. They looked for another city and for a better country. How different the race of our text was from that circumstance. We will find that no good was spawned by their decision. It was not a proper one.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 15 of 39

“LET US . . .”

"And THEY said one to another, Go to [come], LET US make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And THEY had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, LET US build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and LET US make US a name, lest WE be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verses 3,4; Gen 11:1-9)

In this text, there are eleven references to the people, and NONE to God: “they . . . one to another . . . us . . . they . . . they . . . they . . . us . . . us . . . us . . . us . . . we.” Here, therefore, is a project that is of man, through man, and to or for man. Nimrod seized the power (Gen 10:8-9; 1 Chron 1:10), but here was a united and harmonious group that determined to do something. If the test of a valid project is whether or not the people are united in it, this will surely be a distinctly possible contrivance.

THEY SAID TO ONE ANOTHER



“And they said one to another. . .” Other versions read, “said to each other” (NIV), “said to his neighbor” (CEV), “began talking about” (LIVING).

This was not the result of a special gathering of the people. It was not an orchestrated effort, nor was it the result of consensus. They rather all began to think alike, speaking to one another about this ambition. It was apparently not something that was introduced by a leader, but was a thought that all of the people had simultaneously – a unity of the flesh, so to speak. Surely, the naive one would say, this was of the Lord.

It is true that, generally speaking, all flesh thinks the same way. It places the people at the center of the consideration, and seeks what it conceives to be the best thing FOR THEM. It does not reason with God in mind, nor does it gravitate to the pasture of inquiry, seeking the mind of the Lord. Over the past sixty-three years I have been involved in a great number of congregational meetings – in the hundreds. However, only an extremely small number of them ever revealed that everyone was thinking alike – and even then, the number was relatively small.

But that is not the case in our text. This was not a small number of wandering nomads. It was a sufficient number of people to have the multiplicity of nations eventually formed from it. These were not redeemed people. They were not worshipers of God. They were not seekers of God. Yet, they were in perfect accord, with no evidence of disagreement, hostility, or disruption.

In this text, no one of record thought of inquiring of the Lord what would be the best thing to do. No one prayed. No one sought wisdom. No one felt the people were insufficient to do what was desired. No one thought the project was too large–i.e. building a city, and a tower that reached up to heaven. Where in all of the world could you find a body of people having these characteristics?

For example, in population rating, the United States of America is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populated country (309,266,000), trailing China (first, 1.2 billion), and India (second, 1.1 billion). Indonesia is fourth (262,025,535). Most nations are relatively small. The USA is the 178<sup>th</sup> by population density or compactness. Where in all the world can a body of people be found that are perfectly united, with no hostility or variance. That cannot be found at the national level, regional level, or city level. Rarely, in fact, can it be found on even a family level.

Yet, this is the kind of condition revealed in our text. Perfect unity without God, without seeking God or praying. From the standpoint of spiritual aptitude, this was a perfect depiction of the ability of “the flesh,” or the “natural man” (1 Cor 2:14). The unregenerate can unite on certain things. They can construct, discover, “invent” (Prov 8:12; Amos 6:5), build cities, and erect towers. They can organize formidable armies, and fabricate remarkable weaponry. They can make noteworthy scholastic advance, and write volumes of books. However, they cannot discover the fact of their alienation from God, or ponder their eternal destiny. In fact, they cannot move a single millimeter toward God, or discover a means of effective atonement, or become righteous on their own. In such matters, God Himself has to enter into the equation. In these matters “the flesh,” or man by nature, is totally powerless, having not a single vestige of eternally profitable aptitude.

The event of our text took place before the reality of what was declared by Paul to the Athenian philosophers: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:26-27). Nations did not exist at the time of our text. They were the result of the people being "divided," which had not yet taken place. Moses declares a time "When the Most High DIVIDED TO THE NATIONS their inheritance, when He SEPARATED the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut 32:8). That, we understand, is what will take place in our text.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 16 of 39

### BRICK FOR STONE AND SLIME FOR MORTAR

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." (Verse 3, Gen 11:1-9)

"GO TO . . ."

Other versions read, "Come," <sup>NKJV</sup> "give help," <sup>YLT</sup> and "come on." <sup>GNB</sup>

The words "go to" are translated from a single Hebrew word with the following meaning: "to give, provide, ascribe, come; to set, place; to grant, permit, come now" (STRONG'S).

This expression is used three times in this passage. Twice it refers to the people (11:3-4), and once to the Godhead (11:7). It is also used in Genesis 38:16, 2 Kings 5:5, Ecclesiastes 2:1, James 4:13, and James 5:1). It is an expression that equates to a call and determination to DO SOMETHING, as opposed to just thinking about it. It speaks of resolve and a determination to do something in view of the present circumstances. From the standpoint of etymology, it is a hortatory expletive – in this case, like a one word exhortation. What kind of ambition was birthed by the thinking and speaking of these people?

"LET US MAKE BRICK"

"Brick" was the result of human ingenuity that enabled the construction of something more stable and permanent. It is what was used when the Egyptians had the Israelites build them two great cities (Ex 1:11,14; 5:7-16). Israel provoked God to anger when they made altars of "brick," burning incense upon them (Isa 65:3).

Note that the production of "brick" was intended to take the place of stone: "brick for stone." The binding agent for the bricks, which were to be used in building, was "slime." Other versions read "asphalt" (NKJV), "tar" (NASB), "bitumen" (NRSV), "sticky earth" (BBE), and "clay" (CJB).

“Slime” was a sticky substance that was found in various places, thought to ooze up to the surface. It was tar-like, with adhesive qualities. When heated, it becomes hard like rock (Smith’s Bible Dictionary). Genesis 14:10 states that many “slime pits” were found in the vale of Siddim (Gen 14:10). When infant Moses’ mother prepared an ark for him, she “daubed it with slime and pitch” (Ex 2:3).

It is exceedingly difficult to think of this project with the evolutionary process of human development in mind. If you think of humanity as beginning with Adam, who was a mature man at the start, was thoughtful and discerning, with powers of reason, naming the animals, and capable of intelligent conversation, our text is easy to understand. If you think of it with the theory of evolution in mind, it will cause the account to appear nothing more than a myth. Also, with all of this amazing aptitude, mankind was not at its best state. Rather, it was at a low state, without thoughts of God, and using natural aptitude for ignoble purposes. Their purpose required thought, talent, cooperation, and the purposeful development of something extensive, stable, and useful. That was all accomplished by men in a fallen state – by men who did not think of God – by persons who were thoroughly selfish and self-centered.

And what will the people do with these bricks and mortar? What is their project? A house? A storage area? An altar? A means of travel? Their project will itself be a commentary on their moral and spiritual condition.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 17 of 39

### LET US BUILD US A CITY AND A TOWER

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verse 4, Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, “Then they said, “let us build OURSELVES a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens” (NIV), “build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens” (NRSV), “let us make a town, and a tower whose top will go up as high as heaven” (BBE), “a tower with its top in the sky” (CSB), “a tower, whose top {may reach} to heaven” (WEB), “and tower, and its head in the heavens” (YLT), “a great city, with a temple-tower reaching to the skies—a proud, eternal monument to themselves” (LIVING), “and tower of which the top will unto the heaven” (ABP), “and a tower that reaches Heaven” (MESSAGE).

This entire project was for themselves. In building a city, they were making dwellings and provisions for themselves. The tower represented a special token of achievement. The Living Bible reads that it was a “temple-tower,” which represents it as a religious structure.

### SOMETHING TO NOTE

There is something special that ought to be noted here. Even in a fallen state, men are capable of engaging in remarkable efforts. There is a kind of greatness in man that can be exploited for ignoble purposes. This aptitude is enhanced when people are born again. It was revealed to Daniel that a time was coming when “the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Dan 11:32). May God grant His people a persuasion that “all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mk 9:23). The Lord Jesus Himself stretched our thinking when He “said unto them . . . verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt 17:20). I have noted over the years the remarkable presence of minuscule thinking in the professed church. Such a condition betrays a remarkable level of unbelief. Only in Christ can anything truly great, profitable and approved of God be done.

## A CITY

This was not the first city that was built. Cain is the first man to build a city (Gen 4:17), and he built it before the flood. Of course, all of Cain’s generation (Gen 4:17-24) was destroyed in the flood – all of it! However, the city Cain built it could not have been of the supposed magnitude of this city. Additionally, Cain was consigned to be “a fugitive and a vagabond,” for the earth refused to yield its fruit unto him (Gen 4:11). So far as the record is concerned, it is distinctly possible that those mentioned in our text constituted the entire human race. In fact, the account lends itself to this view. Further, the vagabond spirit was not in it, but they rather thought of settling down. They also had forgotten the commission delivered to Noah: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen 9:1).

## A TOWER

The words of the text reflect the personality of the devil himself. Here, the people aspired to build a tower “whose top may reach into heaven.” Satan’s aspiration is encapsulated in these words: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north” (Isa 14:13). While the parallel is not exact, the spirit reflected in them is of the same order. It involves -SELF EXALTATION, an attitude in which the devil is dominant.

There have been historical efforts to uncover and repair this tower. There are records of those who were sure they had uncovered the remnants of this tower, and work was initiated to restore it. History records than one such effort was made by Alexander the Great, which effort would have been made during the inter-testamental period between Malachi and John the Baptist. All of these efforts have fallen under the same judgment as the original building. God would not allow work to resume on this project.

## APPENDIX

“The Tower of Babel has been associated with known structures according to some modern scholars, notably the Etemenanki, a ziggurat dedicated to the Mesopotamian god Marduk by Nabopolassar, king of Babylonia ©. 610 BCE). The Great Ziggurat of Babylon was 91 metres (300 ft) in height. Alexander the Great ordered it demolished circa 331 BCE in preparation for a

reconstruction that his death forestalled. (Achaemenid History XIII (Leiden 2003), 289–346).”

“Alexander the Great later cleared away much of the rubble, possibly because he intended to reconstruct the Tower himself. Alexander died before he could carry out his plans, but the ruins as they remained then were unearthed by Koldewey a century ago.” (Creation Concepts).

We learn from these opinionated comments that God would not allow this tower to be completed by anyone.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 18 of 39

### AMBITIONS ARE NOTED IN HEAVEN

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded" (Verse 3-5, Gen 11:1-9).

Here was a people who determined and began to implement, a purpose. It was one that seemed wise to them – make a name for themselves, and avoid being scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. They thought they had charge of their own destiny, and that their lives were not being overseen by anyone else. They were of the opinion they were not answerable or accountable to anyone. They imagined their lives were in their own hands – and there was no one they knew who could prove otherwise. The generation of this kind of people reaches down to this very day and hour. Governments are set up thinking that this is true. Both lower and higher schools of learning have been instituted with this thought in mind. There are countless organizations and workshops that address humanity as if this was true. The libraries and bookstores of the world are filled with volumes that assume this is true – that men are the ones who determine what they are, what they will be, what is proper, and what will succeed.

But this thinking is emphatically not true, whatever men may present to justify it! Man is a deliberate and purposeful creation – not the result of a series of evolutionary phases. He was created immediately after the heavens and earth were created – made in a mature and flawlessly-thinking state. Furthermore, all men are responsible to this Creator, and will ultimately give a full account to Him of their thoughts, purposes, words, deeds, and activities. Their Creator has seen to it that they are provided with the revelation of these things – of what God did, why He did it, what man’s obligation is to Him, and how they will give an account to Him.

At the time of our text, these things were not even known, much less acknowledged. Up to this point, no extensive revelation had been given to mankind. It was revealed to Noah that God was going to destroy the earth and all life within it (except for Noah and his family), because “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY” (Gen 6:5). At the

time Noah commenced building the ark, man only knew what was going to happen in the next one hundred and twenty years – no more. God did send a flood as promised, and it is written, "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Gen 7:21-23).

And yet, in our text, a universal "imagination" was formed that took no account of the living God, or the past flood. Men were thinking without considering God – without remembering that in the flood every building project extant at the time proved to be futile.

It is true that all human ambitions are noted in heaven – just as surely as Satan's corrupt aspirations were perceived and evaluated by the Lord – even while he was in heaven (Ezek 38:12-19). Whatever men may imagine about the human race, its freedom and its volitional capacity, men cannot function independent of God's evaluation and judgment. God is in every sense "above all" (Eph 4:6). The Lord "weigheth the spirits" (Prov 16:2). Again it is written, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He pondereth all his goings" (Prov 5:21). The Lord Jesus said to His critics, "God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). Through Jeremiah God affirmed, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer 17:10).

This must be known of God: that there are human purposes and plans that He will not allow to be carried out to their humanly-intended end. As it is written, "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Psa 33:10). This fact is what accounts for vain plans, failed projects, and futile efforts.

Men must learn to reckon on this reality. Their plans and purposes are seen and evaluated by God – whether they know it or not, and whether they like it or not.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 19 of 39

### LET US MAKE US A NAME, #1

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and LET US MAKE A NAME, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verse 4, Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, "make a name for ourselves" (NKJV), "let us make a great name for ourselves" (BBE), "make our name famous" (DOUAY), "get us a name" (GENEVA), and "Then we will be famous" (CEV).

Satan's very first temptation was intended to promote pride: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then YOUR EYES shall be opened, and YE SHALL BE as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). Although self esteem is regarded very highly by men, it is an abomination before God. Solomon wrote, "EVERY ONE that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished" (Prov 16:5). Peter and James wrote that God "resists the proud" (James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). John wrote that "the pride of life" was of "the world," that is not to loved (1 John 2:15-16).

Making a name involves being famous, which, in turn, genders confidence in self. Writing of this kind of thing, Paul warned, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal 6:3). The thing that matters is what God thinks of us, not what we think of ourselves, or others think of us.

There are a variety of explanations of what is meant by making "a name." But it all boils down to focusing on self, and attempting to be secure by accomplishment and reputation. David wrote of this kind of vanity in his 49<sup>th</sup> Psalm: "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Psa 49:11-14).

The development of confidence in self, by its very nature, pushes the thought of God to the periphery of life. That is precisely what it did in this case. Notice that there was no consideration or talk about God among the people. Apparently the knowledge of the results of the flood had worn off, so to speak, and people began to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. I would not doubt that, for many, the memory of the flood was gone – just as it is today.

Those who exalt the "dreams" or aspirations of men, or their secret ambitions, do well to bring that thought under the prevailing thought of God Himself. That God-centered posture postulates that God is, to some extent, known. During the time covered by our text, considerable information had been divulged to men through those who had associations with God.

1. FROM ADAM: 1–God created all things. 2–Men can be tempted by Satan. 3–Sin is known and judged by God. 4–There is a penalty for sin. 5–The earth was to be filled with people. There was a Seed coming that would crush the head of the serpent.
2. FROM ENOCH: 1–The Lord comes to execute judgment. 2–The Lord convinces all who are ungodly. 3–God is aware of what men say.
3. FROM NOAH: 1–The Spirit of God will not always strive with men. 2– God can make a determination to destroy men, and carry out that determination to the fullest extent. 3–God can protect and enable survival. 4–God determined that the world should be populated.

The determination of the people that is here stated – to make a name for themselves – is totally void of any of those considerations. Whatever caused this kind of thinking to develop, it indicates that, so far as those making this determination were concerned, certain things that were known of God were eventually pushed out of the human mind. This includes the remarkable

epochs of creation, man being cast out of the Garden, and the flood. It is said of several generations, “they forgot the Lord their God” (1 Sam 12:9); “they forgot their Savior” (Psa 106:21); “They have forgotten Me” (Hos 13:6); “thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation” (Isa 17:10) “they have forgotten the Lord their God” (Jer 3:21); “thou hast forgotten Me” (Jer 13:25); “My people have forgotten Me” (Jer 18:15). Such forgetfulness once moved God to say, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6).

The project of Shinar was the direct result of forgetting what was known of God. Those who are devoted to building religious institutions that are well known have done the same thing.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 20 of 39

### LET US MAKE US A NAME, #2

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us MAKE A NAME, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” (Verse 4, Gen 11:1-9)

## THE NATURE OF THE FLESH

The ambition of humanity at the time of our text, confirms the nature of “the flesh.” With all that is said about “the flesh” in Scripture, one might suppose a lot would be said about it within the church, and by its teachers and preachers. But this is not at all the case. Scripture records Jesus saying something specific about “the flesh” at least four times. He said, “the flesh is weak,” “that which is born of flesh is flesh,” “the flesh profiteth nothing,” and “Ye judge after the flesh” (Matt 26:41; John 3:6; 6:63; 8:15). The gravity of those statements is obvious.

The expression “the flesh” is mentioned seventy-seven times from Romans through Jude. The NIV never uses that term, but uses “human nature” instead.

A sampling of the inspired statements about “the flesh” follows.

1. The “motions of sin” work in those who are “in THE FLESH” (Rom 7:5).
2. With “THE FLESH” we serve the law of sin” (Rom 7:25).
3. “For they that are after THE FLESH do mind the things of THE FLESH” (Rom 8:5)
4. “So then they that are in THE FLESH cannot please God” (Rom 8:8).
5. “For if ye live after THE FLESH, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13).
6. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of THE FLESH and of the mind” (Eph 2:3).
7. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of THE FLESH” (1 Pet 3:21).
8. “But chiefly them that walk after THE FLESH in the lust of uncleanness, and despise



government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2 Pet 2:10).

9. "For all that is in the world, the lust of THE FLESH, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

10. "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by THE FLESH" (Jude 1:23).

There is also "fleshly wisdom" (2 Cor 1:12), a "fleshly mind" (Col 2:18), and "fleshly lusts" (1 Pet 2:11).

The expression "the flesh" speaks of humanity in its unregenerate state. Presently, the saved are not yet regenerated in the body which will be redeemed, or regenerated, at the coming of the Lord (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; Phil 3:20-21). The unregenerate part of us remains with us after we have been born again, and is identified as "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph 4:22). When we are baptized into Christ, our "old man" is "crucified" (Rom 6:6) – placed on the cross in order to die. While "the flesh" is still with us, it is not part of our essential nature. In the circumcision of Christ, it was separated from our new self – the "new man" (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Now, there are two "men" in our bodies, and only one can dominate. The "new man" is the only human identity God recognizes. It is the responsibility of every believer to keep "the flesh," or "the old man," on the cross (Gal 5:24). All of the deficiencies and troubles of the believer stem from "the flesh."

The nature of the flesh is saturated with "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All of these are "not of the Father, but are of the world" (1 John 2:16). Making a name for oneself particularly emphasizes "the pride of life." Other versions read, "the boasting of what he [man] has and done" (NIV), "pride in riches" (NRSV), "the vainglory of life" (BBE), "the pretensions of life" (CJB), "pride in ones lifestyle" (CSB), "the pride of the world" (MRD), "boastful pride of life" (NAU), "arrogance produced by material possessions" (NET), "pride in possession" (NJB), "pride in our achievements and possessions" (NLT), "pride of goods" (TNT), "the ostentation [showy, flamboyant, excessive display] of the life" (YLT), "the pride that comes from wealth and importance" (LIVING), "the proud glory of life" (MONTGOMERY), "being too proud of what we have" (ERV), "wanting to appear important" (MESSAGE), and "assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things" (AMPLIFIED).

You see with what difficulty the translators handle the phrase "pride of life." In a nutshell, "pride" constrains a person to, in their thinking, take the place of God. Such a person does not consider God, but places their own will in His place, and chooses to live altogether independent of God. Boiled down to its essence, it is shaping ones life so that a high regard in the world can be obtained.

The people in our text, who were endeavoring to make a name for themselves, had to do with how they were perceived by others. In their judgment, building an impressive city and tower would gain safety, and the desired fame of their peers. That is the nature of "the flesh."

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 21 of 39

### THE DEVIL

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verses 3-4, Gen 11:1-9)

In the fuller revelation that has taken place from Moses on, we know that Satan was behind this defection of mankind. Although, dulled by their own ambition, the people did not know it, they were thinking like the devil, confirming that he was exploiting them in his vain effort to overthrow the work of God.

Of course, the chief example of pride is the devil himself. His effort is described as follows: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I WILL ascend into heaven, I WILL exalt my throne above the stars of God: I WILL sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I WILL ascend above the heights of the clouds; I WILL be like the most High" (Isa 14:13-14). Thus the people in our text, in the spirit of self-promotion, said, "LET US make brick . . . LET US BUILD US build US a city and a tower," and "LET US make a name."

Satan's tool, "the pride of life" expressed itself when he tempted Jesus. He referred to what he had, then sought to cause the pride of life to enter Jesus himself. "And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for THAT IS DELIVERED UNTO ME; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:5-7). His efforts were futile against Jesus – but he did have success with others.

### KORAH AND HIS REBELS

When God chose Aaron to be the High Priest of Israel, another Levite, Korah, "gathered all the congregation against them [the priests who stood with Aaron] unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation." (Num 16:19). When the rebellion waxed strong, God commanded the people to separate from Korah and those with him. The Lord then judged Korah and his associates for their pride: "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods." (Num 16:32)

### KING UZZIAH

Although he was phenomenally creative in military matters, it is said of him, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense." (2 Chron

26:16). When the priests and valiant men attempted to restrain him, "Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar" (2 Chr 26:19).

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Here was a man that God used, referring to him as "My servant" (Jer 27:6). The Lord used him to chasten Israel for not honoring the land-sabbaths (2 Chron 36:21). There came a time when Satan worked in him also, " when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him" (Dan 5:20). He wandered in the open field for seven years, his hair and nails growing long, and his diet being grass (Dan 5:21).

### ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

Another example of the pride of life is seen in Ananias and Sapphira. In their case, the pride was not seen in what they possessed, but in what they gave. They sought to appear more noble before men than they actually were. Their effort to appear great before men was NOT accomplished by what they did. Peter said their hearts moved them to lie to the Holy Spirit and to God (Acts 5:3-5). He said they had "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 5:9). Their lives were taken from them.

### DIOTREPHES

When writing to Gaius, John the apostle spoke of a prideful man: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." (3 John 1:9-10). We do not know what happened to Diotrephes, but whatever it was is certainly not something to be coveted.

God's people are to learn from these examples, and zealously avoid self-promotion, and seeking to gain honor from men.

### A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verse 4, Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 22 of 39

### LEST WE BE SCATTERED ABROAD

" . . . lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Other versions read,

“otherwise we shall be scattered,”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”<sup>ESV</sup>

The impact of forgetting God is seen in this expression. The people reasoned as though their destiny was to be established and realized in their own plans. They also thought without regard to God’s revealed intentions – “replenish the earth” (Gen 9:1). Already, they were out of harmony with the God of heaven.

This confirmed that human nature had not changed. Eve thought of herself. Cain thought of himself. The whole world of Noah’s day was absorbed with self. And here, this human trait rises to the surface again.

Note that they feared being “scattered,” or dispersed. They sensed that dispersion would make them weaker, more vulnerable, and limited in what they could do. They sought the wrong means to avoid dispersion – building a city and tower, and making a name for themselves. They also did not consider that God Almighty could become their enemy, and scatter them. It did not come into their minds to give regard to how God viewed their project.

In contemporary “Christianity,” men have thought precisely the same as those godless wanderers in Shinar. They have not considered the impact that the staggering number of divisions among them has had upon their witness, their abilities, and their strength. All of these have been neutralized by their fragmentation. This is why they have made little or no progress in, what is called, “world evangelism.” Although there are billions of dollars being spent on relieving poverty in depressed nations, it still exists. Instead of idols being destroyed as they were in Gideon’s day (Judges 6:26-27), and in time of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:24), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4), idol worship has increased, and has now entered into our own country. There are now mosques, and the idolatrous practices of India in the United States. No mega-church has been able to rid the country of these intrusions – in fact, there is little concern about it.

The professed church is divided, and cannot work together successfully in any sense.

After Israel was scattered, and some had come to their senses about their situation, they confessed the sins of past generations. The Psalmist prayed, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." (Psa 106:6), Jeremiah said, "We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against Thee" (Jer 14:20). Daniel prayed, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which he set before us by His servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him." (Dan 9:11).

It is well past time for the sinful divisions in the professed church to admit they have been led astray by those who formed the divisions. Erroneous emphases have been developed and embraced. False views of Christ Jesus, His atoning death, His present ministry, and His second coming have been perpetrated and embraced. A form godliness has been promoted and put into place that is powerless. False views that allow for immorality and disinterest have been

embraced. These unfortunate realities must be acknowledged for what they are before God, and forthwith abandoned. No substantial change will take place until this is done.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 23 of 39

### MEN ARE ORIGINATIVE

"And they said one to another, Go to, LET US MAKE brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, LET US BUILD us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and LET US MAKE us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Verses 3-4, Gen 11:1-9)

By nature, men are originative. That is involved in being created in the image of God. I use the word "originative" because only God can create – that is why He alone is referred to as the "Creator" (Eccl 12:1; Isa 40:28; 43:15; Rom 1:25; 1 Pet 4:19). Outside of Christ, however, man's originative ability tends toward corruption. Even supposedly beneficial things become obsolete, and can be grossly abused. However, sin has made men totally unaware of this reality. Speaking from the human perspective – and only from the human perspective – Solomon wrote, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl 1:9). Even things that have been invented have been made from the things that already exist. They were not, in the true sense of the word, "created."

When it comes to the salvation of God, however, there are a number of "new things" that are now available on earth: i.e.– justification, the "new creation," "newness of life," the indwelling Spirit, etc. Men were totally incapable of inventing things like this.

The Scriptures speak about man's "inventions," things that are conceived by human imagination, and carried out by their ingenuity.

1. "Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their INVENTIONS" (Psa 99:8).
2. "Thus they provoked him to anger with their INVENTIONS: and the plague brake in upon them" (Psa 106:29).
3. "Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own INVENTIONS" (Psa 106:39).
4. "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty INVENTIONS" (Prov 8:12).
5. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many INVENTIONS." (Eccl 7:29)
6. "That chant to the sound of the viol, and INVENT to themselves instruments of music, like David" (Amos 6:5)

In this case, "Inventions" refers to different ways of sinning and carrying our selfish purposes.

“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl 7:29). Here the word ranges from “devices” (NASB–STRONG’S), to “schemes” (NKJV). Our text confirms the originative nature of man employed for ignoble purposes – to build a tower that reached to heaven in order to gain a name for themselves. In our days, wicked men have sought out new and different ways of indulging perverse appetites.

In our text, the people also assumed their longevity and continuance together, and therefore sought safety by means of human innovation. They did not ask God for safety, or to be recognized by Him. They turned to their own flawed thinking, and eroding abilities, treating them as though they were creative resources. What James wrote over two millennia later, was very true at that time also: “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

Whether they were aware of it or not, they were resisting God. They ignored their conscience, and proceeded in an attempt to secure their future by their own means. This required the subduing of their inward sense of right and wrong, and their conscience (Rom 2:15).

It ought to be apparent that this manner of approaching life still exists among men. There have been numerous and consistent attempts to dignify this way of living by the promotion of “long-range planning,” etc. However, it is always wrong to approach life as though longevity was guaranteed and God had no will for the future.

No professing Christ can afford to live like that.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 24 of 39

### THE LORD CAME DOWN TO SEE

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Verse 5-7, Gen 11:1-9)

### THE LORD CAME DOWN

“And the LORD came down . . .” All versions read the same way, differing only in the reference to “the Lord” – “Yahweh” (NJB), “Jehovah” (YLT), and “God” (LIVING).

This phraseology is designed to teach us that there are times when God especially devotes His attention to something or someone. It is always a prelude to God DOING something. While God knows all things (1 John 3:20), and nothing is hidden from Him (Lk 16:15; 2 Cor 11:11), there are several occasions during which this language is employed.

1. **THE BUILDING OF THE CITY AND THE TOWER.** “And the Lord CAME DOWN TO SEE the city” (Gen 11:5). This is the first recorded instance of God coming down. In this case, it was to examine the work being done, which was the prelude to a judgment.
2. **THE MORAL DEGRADATION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.** "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know" (Gen 18:21). This also was a prelude to a judgment. God disapproved of what was going on in these cities, and therefore determined to do something about it.
3. **AT THE GIVING OF THE LAW.** “The Lord CAME DOWN upon Mount Sinai” (Ex 19:20). In this case, the Law was given. It made little difference whether or not the people wanted a Law. They would be given one, whether they liked it or not. That Law would be the framework within which God would deal with them.
4. **WHEN REVEALING HIMSELF TO MOSES.** “The Lord DESCENDED” (Ex 34:5). This was a special revelation of God’s Person to Moses. God had chosen Moses to deliver and lead His people (Ex 3). He would not tolerate the people rejecting that choice, and therefore took note of their attitudes and rebellion.
5. **WHEN DISTRIBUTING SOME OF THE SPIRIT THAT WAS ON MOSES.** “Lord CAME DOWN in a cloud” (Num 11:25). This was to superintend the development of additional leaders who would assist Moses in judging Israel. Moses’ father-in-law was aware of the burden Moses was bearing, but could only make a recommendation (Ex 18:15-27). God later “came down” had Moses gather seventy men to share the burden of leadership, and took some of the Spirit that was on Moses, and put it on them (Num 11:16-17).
6. **IN DEFENSE OF MOSES.** “Lord CAME DOWN in a pillar” (Num 12:5). This was a special appearance to confirm that Moses really had no competitors.

In coming down, God forcibly injected Himself into time and the affairs of men. In this text, the circumstance was not pleasing to God. In fact it was in opposition to His determined will. Thus He came into the affairs of men and imposed His will upon them.

I have noted over the years that men speak in a kind of impersonal way about God Almighty, saying He is “Omniscient,” or all knowing – which is certainly true. But there is more to His knowledge than this. He not only knows all things, He evaluates and judges all things. Further, there are times when He reacts to what He sees and knows. Men must be made aware of these realities. God is never indifferent toward mankind.

#### A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded."  
(Verse 3, Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 25 of 39

#### TO SEE THE CITY AND THE TOWER

Other version read “to look at” (NLT), and “to look over” (MESSAGE).

The mind of the flesh will wonder why God came down to see the city and the tower. Is it not written, “The LORD looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth” (Psa 33:13-14). Is not that enough – for God to see and know what is going on? Indeed, it is not. The Almighty God is not passive. It is quite true that some professing Christians imagine that God does not intrude into the affairs of men, or do anything supernatural – that all of that has ceased, and men are now living on their own – by their imagined “free will.” But they are simply wrong, and there is no nice way to say it – seriously wrong. Furthermore, it is never right nor safe to be wrong about God.

The expression “Let US” denoted the multiplicity of personalities in the Godhead. This does not denote God speaking with angels, seraphs, or cherubs. When referring to Deity, the term “US” is used at least five times.

1. WHEN MAN WAS CREATED. “Let US make man in OUR image” (Gen 1:26). That “image” was revealed in multiple personalities – Adam and Eve.
2. WHEN MAN FELL BY TRANSGRESSION. “Behold the man is become as one of US . . .” (Gen 3:22).
3. WHEN MEN WERE BUILDING. “Let US go down and there confound their language” (Gen 11:7).
4. WHEN ISAIAH SAW THE LORD. “Whom shall WE send, and who will go for US ” (Isa 6:9).
5. WHEN JESUS PRAYED IN GETHSEMANE. Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in US . . .” (John 17:21).

Although many professing Christians have great difficulty with this matter, it ought not to be so. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are ALL referred to as “God.”

1. THE FATHER (John 6:27; 1 Cor 15:24; Gal 1:1,3; Eph 5:20, etc).
2. THE SON (Isa 9:6; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8).
3. THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 5:3-4).

This cannot mean God is a single Personality, manifested in three different functions – as the “Jesus only” people affirm. Not even men refer to a multi-functional person as “us” or “our.”

Admittedly, there is an element of mystery to all of this, but it is only so perceived by men. This is NOT a mystery in heaven. There, the personalities can see a clear distinction between God and the Lamb (Rev 5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 22:3). Even then, those who are in Christ Jesus do not need to have difficulty in this matter. It is written, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col 2:2). Other versions read, “both the Father and the Son” (NKJV), “God’s mystery, that is Christ Himself” (NASB), “The mystery of God, namely, Christ” (NIV), “the mystery of God, even Christ” (ASV), “the secret of God, even Christ” (BBE), “God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ Himself” (NLT), “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (RWB), and “the secret of the God and Father, and of the Christ” (YLT).



The multiplicity of versions do not do well with this text. The point is that the “mystery” is what God had purposed, and is now carrying out – which was manifested in and through Jesus Christ. Others say that Christ Jesus Himself IS the mystery of God. Christ, however, is a revelation, not a concealment. In my judgment, many modern versions have completely missed the point, and contribute to division, which God is quite clear about avoiding (1 Cor 1:10).

The mystery pertains to what God is doing, not merely to His Person. This is made clear in the Epistles (Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9; 3:3-4,9; 6:19; Col 1:23; 4:3; 1 Tim 3:16). It is true, that much of God is revealed in His purpose.

When the Scriptures say “God is One” (Deut 6:4; Mk 12:29; Gal 3:20), they are not speaking numerically. Rather, it is a term of unity – like “we being many, are ONE body” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:4), “he that planteth and he that watereth are ONE ” (1 Cor 3:8), “we being many are ONE bread” (1 Cor 10:17), "For as the body is ONE, and hath many members, and all the members of that ONE body, being many, are ONE body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor 12:12), and "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are ONE." (1 John 5:7).

The references to “US” and “WE” were not at all clear before and under the Old Covenant. The concepts of the Father and the Son, together with the Spirit, were not developed during those times. For one thing, “the Son” refers to when the Word “became flesh, and dwelt among us”(John 1:14). There were only allusions to the intra-relationships of the Father, He who would become “the Son,” and the Holy Spirit – and even they were not clear until the proclamations of Jesus and His apostles. The failure of the Jewish leaders to receive Christ is found in the fact that they could not discern this mystery – what God was doing. For this reason, they crucified the Lord of glory. Thus it is written, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:7-8).

However, now that Jesus “is come” (1 John 5:20), the mystery has been clarified to those who are “taught by” Jesus (Eph 4:21). He has “given us an understanding” of God (1 John 5:20), so that the language of our text is not confusing. Although many professing Christians still have difficulty comprehending the Godhead, there is no longer any legitimate reason for that ignorance. Further to codify that ignorance, placing it in a “Jesus only” creed, is tantamount to rebellion against God.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 26 of 39

### WHICH THE CHILDREN OF MEN BUILDED

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded."  
(Verse 5, Gen 11:1-9)

Ordinarily, men are to consider the works of God (Job 37:14; Psa 66:5; 78:7). But, here God is considering the works of men – a perspective that has nearly been lost in our day. When inspired people were declaring on the day of Pentecost, their subject was “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11) – and it was enough to get the attention of the people. However, in our text, the Holy Spirit moved Moses to record a specific time when God saw and considered the works of men – and, to Him, the sight was not a pleasing one.

The Lord once said to Samuel, “the Lord does not see as man sees” (1 Sam 16:7, NKJV). God told Ezekiel of the retrogressing people of Israel, “they say, The LORD seeth us not” (Ezek 8:12). And again, “they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not” (Ezek 9:9). O how necessary it is for professing Christians to be awakened to the fact that the Lord sees and evaluates what they are doing. Some of the grandiose plans being made by “Christian” leaders, would never have been made if they were really aware that those plans were being measured and appraised by the Living God.

Keep in mind that this language is adapted to our human frailty. The idea here is that of “the God of heaven” (Rev 11:13) FOCUSING upon the situation. Every time that takes place, God is going to do something about what He is seeing. Historically, “the Lord SAW that Leah was hated” (Gen 29:31). In the wilderness, “the Lord SAW” that Moses turned aside to see the bush that burned, yet was not consumed (Ex 3:4). When Israel sacrificed to demons, “the Lord SAW it” (Deut 32:17-19). The Lord “SAW the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter” (2 Kgs 14:26). When Israel humbled themselves, it is written that “the Lord SAW when they humbled themselves” (2 Chron 12:7). Isaiah wrote, “Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD SAW it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.” (Isa 59:15).

Some people are deeply concerned about what men think of them. It is well past time for men to consider what God sees and thinks of them. Our text has to do with that.

By Divine assessment, the time had come for the Lord to do something about the situation in Shinar, and He will reveal that in a manner that is conducive to understanding. Men were thinking too highly of themselves and their abilities – something that is not to be done (Rom 12:3).

## GOD TAKES NOTE OF HUMAN INNOVATIONS

It is important to discern that God takes note of human innovation and ingenuity. This is not confined to the realm of religion, as our text confirms. Any deviation from His purpose draws His attention, and He will do something about it. Some examples include the following.

1. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their moral conduct (Gen 18:20-21; 19:24-28), which God saw.
2. Jehosaphat made ships to go to Ophir for gold, but “but they never set sail – they were wrecked at Ezion Geber” (1 Kgs 22:48 NIV).
3. A notable example of Divine intervention is found in the Lord’s response to the aims of a plan hatched by Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah. “Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son

of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa 7:5-9).

As the Psalmist wrote, “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psa 33:10).

A lot of failed private enterprises, church plans, national projects, etc. have been brought down by God because they were in sharp conflict with His purpose. We know from our text that God does such things. God’s people should learn to reckon on this reality, and even ask the Lord to throw down certain of the projects of men.

The following concerns documented reports of closed churches – churches that failed.

1. 2008-2013 – 1552 churches closed
2. 2014 – documented 3,700 churches closed
3. Recently, “Chrismanews” magazine headlined: “Study: Thousands of Churches Closing Every Year”
4. Godlike Productions reports: “In America, 3500-4000 churches close their doors each year.” (from the Barna Study -- [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org))
5. Churches lose an estimated 2,765,000 people each year to nominalism and secularism. (from the Barna Study -- [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org))
6. Usual Sunday church attendance has dropped from 1,606,000 in 1968 to 881,000 in 2005.([www.churchsociety.org](http://www.churchsociety.org)) – That is 55%

Is it possible that th above is a judgment from God because of what He has seen. That is certainly something to think about!

It is no wonder that James taught the people of God, “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15). That posture is dictated by life’s uncertainty. A steadfast hope in God is the alternative.

#### A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech . . . Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” (Verse 1, 6, Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 27 of 39

THE POTENTIAL OF BEING UNITED

“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

The potential abilities that attend those created in the image of God are staggering to ponder. Were it not for Divine intervention, there is no mortal that can entertain an adequate perception of what a thoroughly united men could do. This text is a case in point.

Here was something a united and single-speeched people set out to do –“build . . . a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name” (Gen 11:4). They were united in the effort, and thus God took note of the project. What the Lord said of this occasion gives us some idea of human potentiality. When we speak of the impotency of man, and his inability to carry out his desires, it is always within the context of a reigning God and having to do with our affiliation with, and acceptance by, Him.

### BEHOLD, THE PEOPLE IS ONE

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language . . .” This is the only recorded time in history when this Divine statement was made – and at that time, it was not a statement of blessing. While all later versions read “are one,” the point here is that “is” refers to a body of people that were a single entity that was perfectly united.

It is imperative that we note that what follows is a Divine assessment of the situation. It is not a human conclusion, but one spoken by the Lord. What God observes is the unvarnished truth – in every way precise.

Until this very day, this was the last time this condition existed in the human race: “the people is one and they have all one language.” Other versions read, “they are one people, and they all have the same language” (NASB), “as one people speaking the same language” (NIV), “the people are united, they all have a single language” (CJB), “one people all having the same language” (CSB), “it is one people, and all have one tongue” (DOUAY), “they have just begun to exploit their linguistic and political unity” (LIVING), “These people are working together because they all speak the same language” (CEV), “These people all speak the same language. And I see that they are joined together to do this work” (ERV).

There is no way of knowing exactly when the attempt to build the city and the tower in Shinar took place. Some very general estimates can be made based upon the mention of Nimrod and the city of Babel (which is assumed to be the city of reference), and the association of that time with the lifetime of Salah (Gen 10:8-9,24; 11:12-15). That would represent a time span from about 1693-2126, the flood being about 1656. Taking the latter date, it is possible that approximately 450 years had past since the flood.

This very general observation is sufficient to confirm that human nature was not changed by the flood. A project was commenced without considering God, the will of God, or the glory of God.

Now God observes the circumstance. Unity was not a goal here, it was an actual condition – perfect accord. One version suggests that the unity was the result of the people speaking the

same language: “These people are working together because they all speak the same language” (CEV).

How does the Lord view a situation like this? If there is no underlying purpose for the existence of both the world and mankind, this should be a perfectly acceptable situation. However, if there is a specific reason for the world and its inhabitants, and a Divine objective that is being worked out, this circumstance will be weighed in view of those preeminent plans.

In the “Christian arena,” where there are thousands of formal divisions, even a single denomination cannot unite. Who could envision, for example, all the various Baptists united in speech, purpose, and endeavor? How about the Churches of Christ, or all of the Presbyterians, or all of the Methodists. Alas, it is virtually impossible to find a single congregation that is united like those people in the plain of Shinar. God will clearly affirm the possibilities of such a condition.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 28 of 39

### AND THIS THEY BEGIN TO DO

"Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do" (Verse 6, Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, “and this they began to do” (NASB), “they have begun to do this” (NIV), “and this is only the beginning of what they will do (NRSV), “and this is only the start of what they may do” (BBE), “This is only the start of their undertakings” (NJB), “this it hath dreamed of doing” (YLT), and “they have just begun to exploit their linguistic and political unity” (LIVING).

These words are not simply a statement about the specific project they had started – building a city and tower with a top reaching into the heavens. That seems large enough – but it was, according to Divine assessment, only the beginning of what they could do.

At this point they only had a plan – but that plan was considered by God to be a “beginning” of something. It was not a mere wish, but a legitimate beginning. From another perspective, this would not be the only thing they would plan to do – planning without God. This was only their **FIRST PROJECT**. How will the Lord assess it?

Perhaps you have been part of a body of people that made grandiose plans to do something – something that was very challenging, yet had no Divine precedent. Is the Living God unconcerned about such efforts? Does He actually take note of what men plan, or purpose, to do? If He does, and men know it, they will go to the Lord about their plans – validate them.

Bible (King James Version) words for “plan” include “imagination” (Prov 6:18), “imagine” (Zech 7:10), “intent” (1 Chron 28:9), “device” (Jer 18:11), “think” (Neh 6:6), “purpose” (2 Cor

1:17), “thought” (Ezek 38:10), and “counsel” (Acts 5:38; 27:42). The New King James version uses the words “plan” or “plans” in all of these texts, which agrees with the etymological meaning of each of the listed words used in the KJV. As it is written, "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Psa 94:11).

The Lord’s response to human plans, particularly those that do not synch with His own plans, is recorded in Psalm 33:10: “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans (“devices” KJKV) of the peoples of no effect” (Psa 33:10, NKJV). It is also said of man, “His plans (“thoughts” KJV) perish” (Psa 146:4).

The affairs of men, including their plans are monitored and controlled from heaven. It is ever true, "For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations" (Psa 22:28). Again, "For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth" (Psa 47:2). David prayed for judgment upon the ungodly "That men may know that Thou, whose Name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." (Psa 83:18). Now, the Lord Jesus Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Pet 3:22). He has been given to the church as the One "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22) – i.e. He has been given in that capacity to the church. Ultimately, He rules the world in favor of the church. No power or plan will be allowed that will hinder the saints from being brought to glory (Heb 2:10), having all things work out for their good (Rom 8:28), or separate them from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39). No inimical power, regardless of its seeming greatness, can stop the purpose of God from being fulfilled to the finest degree.

Now, with this in mind, the Lord will consider the plans being made in the plain of Shinar.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 29 of 39

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Verse 5-6, Gen 11:1-9)

## NOTHING SHALL BE RESTRAINED

“ . . .and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” Other versions read, “now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them” (NKJV), “now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (NIV), “now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do” (ASV), “now it will not be possible to keep them from any purpose of theirs” (BBE), “now will they be hindered in nothing that they meditate doing” (DARBY), “now nothing shall fail from them of all that they may have undertaken to do” (SEPTUAGINT), “nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach” (TNK), “Nothing will be unattainable for them!” (LIVING ).

These are not the words of a man. This is not the expression of any of the ones determining to build a city and a tower that reached into heaven. These are the words of Deity, God speaking to the other members of the Godhead. This is the Lord speaking of His own creation – mankind.

Made in His own image, men do have a potential that is far beyond any modern conceptions. Here was a people who all thought alike, clearly understood each other, and had the same identical objective. God Almighty stated that, because the people were perfectly united and spoke the same language, they would be able to do anything they desired. Nothing would be “restrained to them” – “nothing they have imagined they can do will be impossible for them” (Amplified Bible). That is, if the assessment of the situation was not managed from above, the project would actually be completed, just as they had planned. It could not be stopped by anyone on earth. Because they were perfectly united, no opposition would rise from their own ranks, threatening the completion of the project. Even though God is absolutely Sovereign over all the earth, yet He Himself said this united people would be able to do anything they imagined. That was not an exaggeration or a hyperbole. Further, it is the truth, for God “cannot lie” (Tit 1:2).

This project was not the result of man’s free will, but of a corrupt and ungodly will – a will that was corrupted and debilitated by sin. Although they considered it a wise project, it was a foolish one. Their potential was great, but not greater than their Creator.

It may have appeared as though God was indifferent to the whole situation – if there was anyone who was even conscious of God. The plan itself confirmed this was not a people who recognized or thought upon the God of heaven. This was all in spite of the fact that the people, who commenced with eight people who survived the flood (1 Pet 3:20), started out with a keen awareness that the population of the entire world had been destroyed by water. As time progressed, this memory grew more dim, and it was soon altogether forgotten. Remember, at the time Noah entered the ark, he was “six hundred years old” (Gen 7:6). He and his family exited from the flood when he was six hundred and one years old, having spent an entire year in the ark (Gen 8:13). Noah died at the age of nine hundred and fifty (Gen 9:29). That means Noah remained in the earth for three hundred and forty-nine years after the flood. I do not know when men ceased to remember the flood, but it was evidently rather early. Now, as this people conspired to build a tower that reached into heaven, there was no thought of God among them.

This is also the ONLY time in history that God said such a thing of humanity. Prior to this, there was no project such as the one the people in the plain of Shinar had proposed. Since then, there has not been a perfectly united people, who all spoke the same language, and determined to do the same thing. That circumstance has caused people to nearly forget altogether what God said in this text.

It also ought to be noted, that God has purposed that a time will come when He will “turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent” (Zeph 3:9), undoing the effects of the judgment at Babel. Serving the Lord “with one consent” means “to serve Him with one accord” (NKJV), “with one mind” (BBE), with a single purpose” (CSB), “to serve Him with one unanimous consent and one united shoulder [bearing the yoke of the Lord]” (Amplified Bible).

It is under this united condition that the words of Daniel will be fulfilled, "but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan 11:32). Other versions read, "carry out great exploits" (NKJV), "display strength and take action" (NASB).

The early church had this kind of unity, and were effective in spreading the truth, even in the face of fierce opposition. From the beginning they were noted for being "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32), and "all that believed were together" (Acts 2:44). By the middle of the first century Paul wrote that the Gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven;" (Col 1:23). Other versions read, "was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (NASB), and "which you heard and which has been preached [as being designed for and offered without restrictions] to every person under heaven" (Amplified Bible).

When, however, the church became divided by heresies, it lost its power. In an attempt to provide a human explanation for this circumstance, the idea was invented that there was an appointed time when the evidences of power ceased, and things settled down to fleshly normalcy. This has been largely embraced by professing Christians. Those who are persuaded the power is still present are as impotent as the rest of the Christian world. Most of the world is still heathen, and the professing church of America is wandering about like a blind man. What has actually happened is that Divine judgment has shut down the power of organized religion. It has degenerated into nothing more than talk – and "the kingdom of God is NOT A MATTER OF TALK but of power" (1 Cor 4:20, NIV).

Ultimately God has purposed "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph 1:10). That will, according to Zephaniah, be preceded by a time of unparalleled unity.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 30 of 39

### THE BLIGHT OF SMALL THINKING

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Gen 11:1-9)

Most of the people of our time would laugh if someone said they were aiming at building a tower that reached into the skies. Some bold souls might imagine that with a lot of planning, materials, and technology it might be possible. But God said the people had planned this, and they were of themselves fully capable of doing it. That is what He said. That was the response of the Godhead to the purpose determined by these people, people God described as "one, and they have all one language" (Gen 11:6).

If God is really not in control, as some allege, this project would have been completed, just as the Lord said. However, there are some professed Christian preachers and teachers who allege



that God is really not in control – that men, by virtue of their free will, are in control. Such ignorance should not be embalmed in speech and print! It will fade like smoke in the blazing glory of the returning Christ.

It seems to me that the church could do with a good dose of large thinking – not thinking that has to do with personal objectives, but thinking related to participating in what the Lord is doing. As “workers together with God” (2 Cor 6:1), and “laborers together with God,” it is appropriate to think of large things – like impacting a continent – when teaching in the school of Tyrannus for two years, it is written of Paul: “And this continued by the space of two years; so that ALL THEY THAT DWELT IN ASIA heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). How about the commission delivered to Paul: “To OPEN their eyes, and to TURN them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” (Acts 26:18). How about fulfilling this word: “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may PUT TO SILENCE THE IGNORANCE OF FOOLISH MEN” (1 Pet 2:15). What of personally standing against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11), perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1), going on unto perfection (Heb 6:1), and “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

It is time for the church to take seriously, and consider extensively some of the challenges of our Savior: “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:6). “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith” (Mark 11:23).

Did Jesus say those words to confirm that His disciples could do great things, or in order to show they could not do so? He spoke to stretch their thinking beyond the normal, above the average, and out of the domain of human aptitude. Daniel prophesied that “the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits,” or “carry out great exploits” [NKJV] (Dan 11:32). He also said, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3). Bounded by the will of God and strong faith, the believer can truthfully say, “I can DO ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil 4:13).

Large and challenging thoughts should not be exclusive to worldly men. The church should not plan like the world does, or engage in ambitions ungodly men can achieve. The aspirations of God’s people should match the provision Jesus has made for them: “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph 1:19). Our Lord is “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20).

It only remains for men to be united with the Lord in His objectives. When that takes place, coupled with the reality of being undivided and speaking the same thing (1 Cor 1:10), things will commence to take place that transcend anything ever conceived by men. Until then, religious

ambition will always be on a toddler level.

There certainly is a lot to be learned from this record of an ancient people.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 31 of 39

### LET US CONFOUND THEIR LANGUAGE

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Gen 11:1-9)

Here is the Lord's reaction – the entire Godhead ("let Us") – to the ambitions of the united people. God was obviously displeased with what He saw. This leads me to some arresting conclusions.

1. The Lord did not complement the people for a noble work. No "well done" here!
2. They had not made their plans with the Lord in mind. They were not conducting their work with Him in their thoughts. In this case, the objective to make themselves a name clashed with the glorifying of the name of the Lord.
3. The plans were in contradiction of the purpose of God to populate the entire earth. In this case, the purpose of God involved filling the earth with inhabitants. Of necessity, that required a distribution of people.

### LET US CONFOUND THEIR LANGUAGE

Other versions read, "confuse their language" (NKJV), "take away the sense of their language" (BBE), "confuse their tongue" (SEPTUAGINT), "confuse the people with different languages" (NLT), "mingle there their pronunciation" (YLT), "give them different languages" (LIVING), "confuse them by making them speak different languages" (CEV), "mix up their language" (GNB), "garble their speech" (MESSAGE), and "confound (mix up, confuse) their language" (AMPLIFIED).

First, let us be clear about this. **ONLY GOD CAN DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS!** And, God did, in fact do this! If it is true, as some allege, that God never violates the human will, or force something upon men, what are we to do with this text? If God really "never forces anyone to do anything," as some sophists allege, then are we to remove this from Scripture, like Jehudi did to Jeremiah's writing (Jer 36:23). It is well past time that professing "Christians" eliminate from their theological vocabulary sayings that have originated with mere men. When any person cannot understand what the Spirit moved men to write, is it really on the part of wisdom to invent an alternative way of saying it?

God is said to determine to confound men's speech so they could not understand one another. It

is something He will CAUSE to happen, whether men consent to it or not. In fact, they will have no option – no opportunity to make a choice. In this matter, God’s will is the truly “free will” – not man’s. This is precisely why Jesus said men are drawn to Him by the Father (John 6:44), and cannot come to Him unless it is “given” to them to do so (John 6:65). If men find that difficult to believe, then they will also find it difficult to believe on the Son.

God knows there are things only He can do, although men are reluctant to receive it, if not thoroughly opposed to the idea. It is written, "The LORD looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men" (Psa 33:13). He does not do so with indifference as some may think. God is in no way hampered by the ambitions, stubbornness, or stupidity of His own creation. The media evangelists who say God cannot do anything unless something is first done or said upon the earth, have only exposed their ignorance to men. Our text is a case in point. No one on earth asked God to do this – in fact, no had the faintest idea that He could do it.

God knew that men cannot work together on the same project if they do not understand each other. Notwithstanding, men in all levels of society continue to attempt to work in contradiction of this principle – in the home, in society, in politics, and even in religion. Some simply say they have “agreed to disagree.” In fact, that is actually lauded as a great accomplishment. If ever there was a half-witted concept, it is “agreeing to disagree.” All that does is guarantee nothing productive will take place. Our text confirms that it true.

Let us not leave this section without observing that God can cause people to be unable to understand one another. We have before us an historical example of this taking place. This is not a subject open for debate. The marvel is not that the Lord CAN do this, but that He does not do it more often. He could, if He so desired, keep things in a constant state of confusion. However, if He did do this, men would be more prone to give the devil credit for it than God.

Therefore He does it infrequently, and when He does, it is apparent that it is not the work of the devil, even if men cannot conclude this.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 32 of 39

### SO, THE LORD SCATTERED THEM

“So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city," (Verse 7, Gen 11:1-9)

Notice that the text says “The LORD scattered them abroad from thence.” Other versions read, “the Lord God sent them away into every part of the earth” (BBE), and “So the Lord dispersed them” (ESV). Most versions, with these few exceptions, read “the Lord scattered . . .” It does not read, “the devil scattered,” but “the Lord scattered.”

The means God used to scatter the people throughout the world was confusing their speech, so they could not understand each other. However, He is the One who scattered them by the

employment of this means. This confirms that, in the body of Christ, men who cannot understand each other cannot live with each other. Those who promote unity – and that is certainly a good thing to promote – MUST tell the people to “all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). There can be no unity without these conditions. Unity is not achieved by compromise. There must be “the same mind” and “the same judgment.” The only thing that interferes with that is entertaining purely humanistic thinking.

This is, in fact, the method God used to uproot, displace, and scatter the people – confusing their speech so they could not understand one another. Moses spoke of the dispersion in this way, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut 32:8). Paul said, “God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:24-26). Those are the divisions caused by God.

Thus the world was, by Divine mandate, occupied by a diversity of people. However, in the ultimate purpose of God, they would be the target for the salvation of God, who will reap souls “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9). Every conceivable circumstance will be overcome, and Satan defeated on every spiritual battlefield. Every kind of person will be in the great host of the sacred throng. Male and female, bond and free, Jew and Greek, old and young, rich and poor, privileged and unprivileged, the formally educated and those lacking formal education. No earthly circumstance or status, however complicated it may appear to be, will of itself exclude people from the Kingdom of God – from the obtaining of salvation and its privileges, to the ministries of edification and comfort.

In the body of Christ some of those privileges include the following: Making your requests known unto God (Phil 4:6); coming to the throne of all grace to obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16); putting on the whole armor of God that you may stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:10-17); being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith (Eph 3:16-17); Walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16); Growing up and being a teacher (Heb 5:12); and being able to “cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). No child of God is excluded from these privileges. They belong to them because they have been “joined unto the Lord,” and are “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). There are systems of religion that limit certain people, leading them to believe these privileges belong to a segment of the body of Christ, and not the whole. Such people are false prophets, and should be ignored. Jesus is not the Head of a divided body, because He Himself is not divided (1 Cor 1:13).

There are communication privileges granted to all the members of the body of Christ: comforting and edifying one another (1 Thess 5:11), teaching and admonishing one another (Col 3:16), and exhorting one another (He 10:25). No one is excluded from speaking unto edification (Eph 4:29). God has restrained no one with a profitable word for the saints from speaking. It is only unprofitable speaking that is forbidden.

With this in mind, we can observe that all unprofitability exists because of division – even as in our text, the building of a city and a tower became unprofitable because of the intention of the project. Thus God caused it to cease.

In the lessons that follow I will develop the thought that God has scattered the modern church because of its ignoble objectives.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 33 of 39

### RECALLING THE DAY OF PENTECOST

"Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Gen 11:1-9)

Pondering what God said about the aptitude of these perfectly united people – "now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do – and the judgment that was leveled against them – "the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city" – take a few moments and consider the day of first Pentecost that took place after Christ had died, risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is good to here observe the manner in which God worked in the day of Pentecost.

It was exactly the opposite of the manner in which He worked at Babel. At Babel the people were united, and God divided them. At Pentecost a divided people came together and God cemented their unity. At Babel He divided the people by different tongues, or languages. On Pentecost the people were united when "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11) were reported in differing tongues, or languages. A single message was spoken, and it was delivered and heard in several differing languages (Acts 2:4,11).

On that eventful and foreordained day, all of the people received the same message. No interpretations were required, but the message was comprehended by all of the people in the same way, even though they had come from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) . Those who believed all heard and obeyed the same message. Thus a preliminary example took place that fulfilled the prophecy of Zephaniah, in which God said He would, "turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent" (Zeph 3:9). The Amplified Bible reads, "For then [changing their impure language] I will give to the people a clear and pure speech from pure lips, THAT THEY MAY ALL call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with ONE unanimous consent and ONE united shoulder [bearing the yoke of the Lord]." ALL that were "pricked in their hearts" asked the same question: "Men and brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). ALL were given the same answer: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). ALL were promised the same thing: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). Before they were baptized, all were ALL given the same

exhortation: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). ALL who gladly received the Word responded the same way: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

The result was a people who were perfectly united: "And ALL that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44). And again, "And they, continuing daily with ONE ACCORD in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and SINGLENES OF HEART" (Acts 2:46). As time progressed "the multitude of them that believed were of ONE HEART and of ONE SOUL: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32).

Now that is how "the church" got started – "And the Lord added to the church DAILY such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). If you take what took place at Pentecost, and what is taking place today in the professed church of our day, and try and fit them together like the two sticks of Ezekiel (Ezek 37:15-23), you will find it impossible to join them together. In spite of the reasoning of some who refer to their church as the same one commenced on the day of Pentecost, they have two different sticks in their hands, and they are not joined together. Their claim is not true, but is nothing more than an institutional aphorism. In the case of Ezekiel, God would join the sticks together, so that the two divisions of the nation no longer would exist.

When those people were joined together on Pentecost, a build project began. Not only did the Lord add to the church every day those who were being saved, the next addition consisted of five thousand men (Acts 4:4). Then we read, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women)" (Acts 5:14). Then we read, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). When confronting fierce persecution, the people remained united. Even though they were scattered by persecution, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). As late as Acts twelve, we read "But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). In Acts nineteen it is reported that Paul departed from disputing synagogues and "separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that ALL they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).

Behold the building of a united people. Have the people who say their objective is to restore the early church restored that church? Are they even attempting to restore that church? Today, instead of growing, the church is shrinking. Christian population is decreasing. And why is this so? It is because professing Christians are divided. They are not speaking the same thing (1 Cor 1:10). They do not have "one heart." They do not have "one soul." The people are not steadfastly continuing "in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Instead. The people are divided, and do not even understand one another. My personal view is that God has done this because of the unacceptable condition and aspirations of the nominal church.

Let it be clear, the modern is not the kind of church of which Jesus is the Head. The glorified Jesus told lethargic, retrogressing, and lifeless churches that if they did not shape up, He would

take away their candlestick – i.e., they would cease to be one of His churches (Rev 2:5). As Hosea said, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hosea 10:12). Perhaps then, what was initiated on the day of Pentecost will continue – as it is intended to do.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 34 of 39

### THEY LEFT OFF TO BUILD THE CITY

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Gen 11:1-9)

Other versions read, "they ceased building the city" (NKJV), "they stopped building the city" (NASB), "gave up building their town" (BBE), "they cease to build the city" (YLT), "that ended the building of the city" (LIVING), "had to stop building the city" (CEV), and "they had to quit building the city" (MESSAGE).

They did not stop the building project because they did not have enough supplies. Jesus spoke of those who started something they were not able to finish. "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:27-28).

In the case of the city and the tower project in Shinar, they were building for the wrong reason, even though they apparently had sufficient materials. It was God who halted the project. In this case, it was the result of not being able to understand one another – a condition God Himself caused. That proved to be an obstacle they could not overcome.

I do not doubt that the landscape of history is cluttered with numberless projects that could not be finished simply because they were started for the wrong reason. God came down, so to speak, to see the work, and was not pleased with what He saw – so He stopped the work.

In the case of failed religious projects, this may not be the way it appears. It may look like they ran out of money, or resources. Perhaps the climate caused the work to halt, or illness, or some other hindrance. But at the root of the matter, it must be pondered whether or not the Lord was well pleased with the project. Was it something that would bring honor to Him, or to man? I am persuaded that a lot of works have been halted by God because they were at variance with His purpose. Other explanations might be offered, but I personally cannot accept them – not if God is really "the Governor among the nations" (Psa 22:28), and is "over all" (Rom 10:12).

God has not placed man on the earth, then left him unattended. This is God's world, and it has been created for His purpose. As it is written, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa 24:1). It is not like a trinket or toy, but is a place where God is demonstrating His grace, mercy, and lovingkindness for principalities and powers

in heavenly places to behold (Eph 3:10). That purpose will prevail! Contrary purpose will be caused to fail.

There are times when heaven causes the purposes of men to fail – like the purpose of Sennacherib, who “purposed to fight against Jerusalem.” However, “the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he [Sennacherib] returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword” (2 Chron 32:2-22). All of that might not have appeared to be the work of a holy angel. But it was. God brought Sennacherib’s purpose to a grinding halt. Again, when Babylon was at its peak, and blustered about what it would do, God said, “Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against Me, a destroying wind; And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about” (Jer 51:1-2). Again, it may not have appeared to men that God brought Babylon down – but He did.

Keep in mind that with all of his power and deception, Satan, who is “the prince of the power of the air,” cannot bring down a genuine work that is being done for and by the Lord. That is why it is written, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39).

But when it comes to purposes that are contrary to His will, God Almighty is the One who “Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness” (Isa 44:25, NKJV). The project men conceived in the plain of Shinar is an example of that truth.

What can men take away from this? A resolve not to engage in an effort that does not properly glorify God. Such a purpose, like the building of the tower in Babel, is destined to fail.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 35 of 39

### THE NAME OF THE CITY

“Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” (Verse 9, Gen 11:1-9)

Here, then, is a work of God – a response to a work of men. It is a work that involved changing the way people spoke, causing confusion, mandating dispersion, and bringing what appeared to be an impressive project to an abrupt and final conclusion. It resulted in the scattering of the people “upon the face of all the earth.” Moses referred to this dispersion when he wrote, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when HE SEPARATED the sons of



Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut 32:8). Paul referred to it when he preached in Athens, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and THE BOUNDS of their habitation" (Acts 17:26).

Here was a people that God Himself acknowledged were able to do anything they wanted, because they were one. However, possibilities must pass through the filter of Divine scrutiny. They must be compared with the unalterable "eternal purpose" of God. Will they contribute to the wisdom of God being made known (Eph 3:10), or will they tend to obscure it. In our day, the question must be asked if there is a prominent place for Jesus in the humanly conceived religious projects of men. Is it for God's revealed purpose, and for Christ's revealed ministry – saving, mediating, interceding, and bringing many sons to glory. Does the project fit into those objectives?

### THE NAME OF THE CITY

"The name of the city is called Babel." Other versions read, "Babylon" (CSB), and "Confusion" (SEPTUAGINT).

The word "Babel" is a transliteration (Babel {baw-bel}), which means there was no appropriate English word for that Hebrew expression. Therefore a special English word was developed, and added to the English repertoire. The lexical meaning is: "Babel or Babylon = "confusion (by mixing); Babel or Babylon, the ancient site and/or capital of Babylonia (modern Hillah) situated on the Euphrates" (Strong's). Earlier in Genesis Moses wrote, "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was BABEL, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (Gen 10:8-10). It appears that Nimrod may have headed up the building project of Genesis 11, although we do not have enough information to be dogmatic on this point.

The word "Babel" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, which is "Babel." This Hebrew word occurs 287 times from Genesis through Zechariah. Except for this verse and Genesis 10:10, it is always translated "Babylon." This is true of all standard versions. Babylon is "the Greek form of Babel" (Easton's Bible Dictionary). The word "Babel" means "confusion."

Throughout history, and through the providence of God, this city – not completed by its initial builders – became known for the confusion God imposed upon it. It is a name that is significant in world history, Scriptural history, and for the church as well. This judgment was one of the great epochs in the workings of God. It was an event that would aid men in having a proper understanding of God's dealings with men. It also introduces us to the concept of the city that was shown to John on the Isle of Patmos. In the Revelation it portrays a spiritual city noted for its immorality, godless prosperity, and feigned or pretended association with the Living God. In the Revelation "Babylon the Great" is referred to as a "whore" (Rev 17:1,15,16; 19:2). The "kings of the earth commit fornication with her (Rev 17:2; 18:3,9; 19:2), and it is noted for "the filthiness of her fornication" (Rev 17:4). This necessarily means that Babylon the Great of Revelation is a depiction of a massive departure from God, for the world itself is never referred

to as a “whore” and being guilty of “fornication.” Those terms postulate a former association with Christ. “Babylon the Great” is to Christ what Gomer was to Hosea (Hosea 1:3; 2:5), and Israel was to God (Hos 8:3,14).

The building project in Shinar foreshadowed the departure from the faith that occurred early in history (1 Tim 4:1-6; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4; 2 Thess 2:3). That defection moved God to do what He did at Shinar: confuse the speech of the city, and scatter the violators throughout the earth. From this view, sectarianism, or denominationalism, is a judgment of God upon a weak and vacillating church. It is the same judgment God made against Israel, when He also “scattered” them throughout the earth (Ezek 11:16; 36:19; Zech 7:14). Three Divine scatterings – judgments from God: One before the Law, One during the Law, and one after the Law.

#### A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." (Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 36 of 39

#### THE PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL BABYLON, #1

This account will give us some understanding of the nature of spiritual Babylon – a subject developed at length in the book of the Revelation (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:1-7; 18:2-23). Keep in mind that after the exaltation of Christ, there is no more talk in Scripture about specific worldly governments, particular nations, or certain earthly kings – None at all. The God of heaven does not warn His people about worldly kings – like Nero, who reigned when much of the writings to the churches was accomplished. This is because He Himself is governing them all.

The twelfth chapter of the Revelation depicts Satan as a dragon that is seeking to destroy the church – the people of God. The people of God are seen as “a woman” about to bring forth a child. That “woman” epitomizes the Jewish people, through whom Jesus came into the world (Rom 9:5). Satan tried to stop the birth and ministry of Jesus, but was unable to do so. The following summarizes that matter. “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a Man Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her Child was caught up unto God, AND TO HIS THRONE” (Rev 12:1-5). Notice, the Man Child (Jesus) did not come down to His throne, but went UP to it.

The Savior having been born and completed the mission on which He had been sent (John 10:17-

18), He was caught up into heaven where He assumed the reins of the Kingdom (Dan 7:13-14; Eph 1:20-21; 1 Tim 6:15; 1 Pet 3:22) in bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). The statement leaps over the entire lifetime and ministry of Jesus, and says He was “caught up into heaven.” That is how futile the machinations of the devil were!

The woman, now depicting the church, fled into a wilderness for protection and nourishment where a special place was prepared for her (Rev 12:6). In the meantime, because sin had been put away, and there was now an Intercessor in heaven, Satan was violently expelled from heaven, together with his angels (Rev 12:7-9). The Intercessor and the accuser could not be in heaven at the same time. In response, a loud voice was heard in heaven announcing the commencement of the salvation that had been promised through the prophets. “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:10-11).

However, there was also a solemn note sounded forth to the redeemed on earth that were working out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12-13). “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev 12:12). It is after this that we are introduced to “Babylon.” This is the chief means through which Satan levels his assault against the saints. His attack is likened to a mighty flood, designed to destroy the people of God. “And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Rev 12:15).

Later, the announcement of the fall of a fierce opponent is announced: “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Rev 14:8).

God remembers Babylon, and commences preparation for her destruction in the sixteenth chapter: “And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath” (Rev 16:19).

In the seventeenth chapter, a holy angel begins to show John the judgment of a certain entity: “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (Rev 17:1). In identifying this enemy, we find that is called “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev 17:5).

The eighteenth chapter of the Revelation spells out the demise of this creation of Satan, designed to destroy the church (Rev 18:1-24). That creation was, in fact, his fabricated church – from his point of view, a seeming ingenious work – nevertheless, targeted for destruction.

In the next lesson, I want to briefly develop how and why Babylon the Great was formed. God

was in control of the whole process, just as surely as He was in the plain of Shinar.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Verses 4-8, Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 37 of 39

## THE PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL BABYLON, #2

### WORKING THROUGH SELF-CENTERED MEN, SATAN CORRUPTED THE CHURCH

Paul prophesied of this condition to the elders of Ephesus. He taught that evil men would arise within the leadership of the church, seeking their own interests, and drawing men to themselves. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

Paul himself was a kind of spiritual barrier to the rise of these men. That is why he said, "after my departing." He affirmed before the brethren the coming apostasy that would be experienced within the church itself (2 Thess 2:3). Peter did the same (2 Pet 2:1-3). It was not merely his presence that hindered the rise of such men, but the pureness of the message that he preached. It was so superior to the false gospels of men that even false prophets appeared hesitant to promote their spiritual wares in his presence. The truth does have a powerful repelling effect upon falsehood. Thus Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders about what would happen after he left them.

When false teachings arose among believers, Paul pointed them out, exposing the falseness of them (1 Cor 15:25; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6; Col 2:16-19; 2 Thess 2:2-3). Peter did the same (2 Pet 2:1-22). Jude did the same (Jude 1:4). John also did this (2 John 2:19; 1 John 4:2-3). Our day is marked by a sectarian naivete and politeness that does not alert the disciples of Jesus of malignant and defiling doctrines that are being circulated among the churches. Some are only concerned if the teachings that are unique to them are questioned, confirming they are not interested in the truth itself.

Paul referred to those who would draw men away to themselves as "grievous wolves," and states they would have no genuine regard for the people of God. They would speak "perverse things" or distortions of the truth (NIV). They would have enough of the truth to, so to speak, flavor THEIR sayings, so their true nature would not be readily detected.

But at this point Paul accents the Nimrod-like nature of these men. Their message was expressly designed to “draw away disciples after them,” or “entice the disciples to follow them” (NRSV). That is an essential element in the building of “Babylon the Great.” Remove that factor, and the walls of Babylon begin to crumble.

## THEY SOUGHT TO BUILD A KIND OF SPIRITUAL TOWER WITH THEIR GOSPEL

City and tower building is a trait of Babylon the Great. Peter referred to this as merchandising the people. “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet 2:3). Other versions read “exploit you” (NKJV).

In revealing the nature of Babylon the Great to John, the angel declared she bartered with “the souls of men” (Rev 18:13). It was an aggressive attempt to make a name for herself – like building a city and a tower.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

Lesson 38 of 39

## IN BABYLON THE GREAT THEY SPEAK WITH DECEPTIVE UNITY

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Gen 11:1-9)

There is a very subtle thread of unity that unites all of the ministers of “Babylon the Great.” It is stated in this way by the apostles: “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5). In all the various nuances of sectarianism, or denominationalism, this statement precisely describes the existing condition. “The world” has gotten into the people, the theological positions, and the ministers themselves – and that condition voids the labors of those in it. The reason – “what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor 6:14-16). There is absolutely no way for the admixtures described above to be achieved. They cannot be spiritually homogenized.

The leaders of “Babylon the Great,” working under the auspices of the devil himself, use “covetousness” to attract the people – a desire for the things of this world. Thus Peter wrote of spiritual defection, “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make

merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet 2:2-3). The merchandising of reference is one of the traits of Babylon the Great: "And the MERCHANTS of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their MERCHANDISE any more: The MERCHANDISE of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, AND SOULS OF MEN" (Rev 18:11-13). The attempt to make merchandise of the souls of people is uniquely a religious trait.

The object coveted ranges from a flourishing community "church," to favorable domestic circumstances, and health and wealth – but it all has to do with THIS WORLD. Babylon the Great has an essentially worldly message, and is expert at making it sound good. I disrespectfully and particularly dedicate this to the merchants of a health and wealth gospel.

### GOD TOOK NOTE OF THEIR EFFORTS AND DISPERSED THE PEOPLE

Here is the very condition on which Babylon the Great did not reckon: "The LORD looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth" (Psa 33:13-14). Just as He took special note of the people who were building a city and tower to make a name for themselves, so He beheld the corruption that was being cultured in the professed church.

And what did God do about this circumstance? He confounded their language so they could not understand one another. The people did not speak in different linguistic dialects, but began to employ, in their theological vocabulary, "words which man's wisdom teacheth" – words that were not taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13). Soon the people did not understand one another BECAUSE OF unique words and phrases that were employed in the perpetuating of their version of "Christianity." Some present day expressions include, "the plan of salvation," "eternal security," "the free will of man," "free moral agency," "the new testament church," "the second blessing," "the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues," "the Sabbath commandment," "health and wealth," "the Toronto Blessing," "the Restoration Movement," "the Reformation Movement," "unconditional love," etc. All of these expressions are nothing more than the compendium and expression of the wisdom of this world.

God has used this fractured language to divide the people, so that they cannot complete the work on Babylon the Great, just as the builders in Shinar could not complete their project. This is the very thing to which Paul alluded when he wrote to the divided Corinthians, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor 11:19). Other versions read, "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval" (NIV), and "For doubtless there have to be factions or parties among you in order that they who are genuine and of approved fitness may become evident and plainly recognized among you" (AMPLIFIED).

These differing messages cause the people of God to surface – and they stand, by Divine

intention, in stark contrast to all other professing Christians.

## A FAILED BUILDING PROGRAM

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." (Gen 11:1-9)

Lesson 39 of 39

## CONCLUSION

Thus the first joint project of humanity was brought to an abrupt conclusion – a grinding halt. It was an impressive project, and God Himself said it would be done if He did not intervene. God focused on that project, considered it, and, judging it unworthy to continue, terminated it because it was for the wrong purpose – for the glory of man instead of the glory of God. Once He had so judged, it was absolutely impossible for the project to continue. The termination was immediate and thorough.

He has done this throughout history, aborting the efforts of men and governments who exalt themselves, overthrowing them at His discretion. No person and no circumstance could effectively compete with His decision concerning the Shinar builders and their project. The termination of that project did not involve any kind of opposition or battle – from men, or from the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). Keep in mind, this is the God who has saved us (2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:5), and is keeping us from falling (Jude 1:24). This is the God who has determined those whom He is saving will be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29-30).

God destroyed an entire world because of its rebellion:—i.e., the flood (Gen 7:21-23; 2 Pet 2:5).

God has brought empires down – i.e. Egypt (Isa 19:1-10), Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome (Dan 2:36-44). Prominent nations have been overthrown: the Amalekites (Ex 17:14), Philistines (Jer 47:1-4), Assyrians (Isa 14:24-25; Nah 3:18-19), and Edomites (Num 24:18; Jer 49:17).

God has also destroyed prominent cities—i.e. Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim (Deut 29:23); Tyre and Sidon (Isa 23:1-17); Nineveh (Zeph 2:13-15); Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-38).

God has removed kings—i.e. Pharaoh (Psa 136:15); Saul (Acts 13:21-22), Sennacherib (2 Kgs 19:36-37), Belshazzar (Dan 5:24-28,31), Sihon and Og (Deut 1:3-4), and Herod (Acts 12:21).

In all of these judgments, it was the will of the Lord that dominated, and His purpose that continued to progress toward its appointed fulfillment. It was no different in the judgment that was brought upon the whole human race in the plain of Shinar. When their pride erupted in the planning of a city and a tower, it drew the attention and the action of the ruling and reigning God.

It is true, and you can trust that it is so, there is not a single purpose or plan of man that is contrary to the will of God that will not be thrown down. Such purposes cannot survive the judgment of the Almighty God. If you are in Christ, and are having difficulty with enemies aligned against you “for righteousness sake,” remember that their purposes will be thrown down. If governments and clusters of rulers are purposing things that contradict the will of God, remember, they will ultimately be thrown down. Those with such purposes are living and working on God’s threshing floor. There is an appointed time that is advancing toward us when the Lord “will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12). You can, and must, count on that!

– Given O. Blakely