



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 17



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE. ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), **AMPLIFIED** =Amplified Bible (1965), **ABP**=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **CEV**=Contemporary English Version (1995); **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ERV** =English Revised Version (1885), **ESV**=English Stand Version (2001), **GENEVA**=Geneva Bible (1599), **GNB**=Good News (1966), **GWN**=God's Word (1995), **IE**= International English (1973), **ISV**=International Standard Version (1967), **JPS**=Jewish Publication Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LITV**= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), **LIVING**=Living Bible (1971), **MESSAGE**=The Message (1993), **MKJV**= Modern KJV (1962), **MONTGOMERY**=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD**=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS**=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT**=Bishop's New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **WEB**=Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS**=William's New Testament (1937), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT** =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, **UBS** = UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA** = Louw-Nida Lexicon, **LIDDELL SCOTT** = Liddell Scott Lexicon, **THAYER** = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, **LEH** = LEH Lexicon, **GINGRICH** = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

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THE PEOPLE CONSPIRE TO BUILD A CITY AND A TOWER

Gen 11:1 “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹ 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.” (Genesis 11:1-9)

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 united and spoke the same language.** Yet, together they did not engage in a quest for God,

which was the reason for their very existence (Acts 17:26-27). Instead, they 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

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

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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.

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.

THE REVELATION GIVEN TO MOSES

It is generally understood that Moses is the author of the first five books of the 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 "*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.**

This being true, the amount of information divulged to Moses, and the length of time it covered, 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.

- ➔ The creation
- ➔ The first mention of Satan
- ➔ The first sin
- ➔ The first judgment of sin
- ➔ The first murder
- ➔ The record of Enoch
- ➔ The record of Noah
- ➔ The flood
- ➔ The populating of the earth after the flood.
- ➔ The origin of nations and languages.
- ➔ The judgment at Babel
- ➔ The calling and life of Abraham

- ➔ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- ➔ The events associated with the birth of Isaac.
- ➔ The lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- ➔ The life of Joseph
- ➔ The entrance of Abraham's progeny through Isaac into Egypt.
- ➔ Israel's bondage and treatment in Egypt.
- ➔ The fact that Israel would be delivered from Egypt, and the selection of Moses to lead them out.
- ➔ Israel's deliverance from Egypt.
- ➔ The giving of the Law with all of its commandments and ordinances.
- ➔ The layout for the construction of the Tabernacle.
- ➔ Israel's wandering in the wilderness.
- ➔ The life of Job

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). Also, the most extensive exposure to the visible glory of God given to an offspring of Adam

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 man and God.

that is recorded, is the revelation of His glory to Moses, who is the only man of record who asked to see that glory (Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-9).

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.

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 man and God. 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, who He has created.

FIRSTS FOUND IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis 1:1-11:9

1. First mention of God (Gen 1:1)	25. First Divine interrogation (Gen 3:9-13)	48. First men of the Spirit striving with men (Gen 6:3)	64. The first person God affirmed He saw as "righteous" (Gen 7:1).	80. The first mention of animals fearing mankind (Gen 9:2).
2. First circumstance of chaos and disorder (Gen 1:2)	26. First Vicarious death (Gen 3:21)	49. First reference to a society of ruthless men (Gen 6:4)	65. First record of someone being saved because of another (Gen 7:1).	81. The first addition to the human diet (Gen 9:3).
3. First mention of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2)	27. First Divinely provided clothing (Gen 3:21)	50. First reference to man's thoughts being corrupt (Gen 6:4).	66. First record of animals being saved (Gen 7:8).	82. The first approval of eating meat (Gen 9:3-4).
4. First commandment (Gen 1:3)	28. First Promise (Gen 3:15)	51. First reference to God repenting (Gen 6:6).	67. First rain (Gen 7:12).	83. The first prohibition of eating blood (Gen 9:4).
5. First none-heavenly orderliness (Gen 1:4-10)	29. First Curse among men (Gen 3:17)	52. First reference to a universal judgment (Gen 6:2).	68. First and only universal flood (Gen 7:18-20).	84. The first authorization of capital punishment (Gen 9:5-6).
6. First Separation (Gen 1:4,7)	30. First expulsion (Gen 3:23-24)	53. First reference to a person finding grace (Gen 6:).	69. First opening of the fountains in the earth (Gen 7:2,11).	85. The first covenant established with the seed of a principle person (Gen 9:9).
7. First Day and night (Gen 1:5)	31. First Birth *Gen (Gen 4:1)	54. First reference to a man who was just and perfect in his generation (Gen 6:9).	70. First opening of the windows of heaven (Gen 7:11).	86. The first covenant with living creatures (Gen 9:10).
8. First Terrestrial substance (Gen 1:10)	32. First Offering (Gen 4:3)	55. First reference to the total corruption of humanity (Gen 6:12).	71. First destruction of every living substance (Gen 7:23).	87. The first promise to never again cut off all living beings with a flood (Gen 9:11).
9. First Vegetation life (Gen 1:11-12)	33. First accepted sacrifice (Gen 4:4)	56. First reference to "the end of all flesh" (Gen 6:13).	72. First time God is said to have remembered someone (Gen 8:1).	88. The first token of a covenant (Gen 9:12).
10. First Celestial substance (Gen 1:16)	34. First rejected sacrifice (Gen 4:5)	57. First boat built (Gen 6:14-15).	73. First record of a drying wind (Gen 8:1).	89. The first reference to a rainbow (Gen 9:13-17).
11. First sea-life (Gen 1:20-22)	35. First human reaction to a rejected sacrifice (Gen 4:5)	58. First reference to a flood (Gen 6:17).	74. First confirmation of newness of life following a curse (Gen 8:11).	90. The first reference to God remembering a covenant He made (Gen 9:15-16).
12. First fowl (Gen 1:20)	36. First time a man became angry (Gen 4:5-6)	59. First Covenant made with a man (Gen 6:18).	75. First record of a deliverance (Gen 8:18-19)	91. The first reference to a husbandman (Gen 9:20).
13. First Animal life (Gen 1:24-25)	37. First Divine response to human anger (Gen 4:6-16)	60. First reference to someone being saved (Gen 6:18).	76. First building of an altar (Gen 8:20).	92. The first reference to a vineyard (Gen 9:20).
14. First language of plurality in the Godhead (Gen 1:26)	38. First Murder (Gen 4:8)	61. First reference to the gathering of animals (Gen 6:19-20).	77. First known sacrificial offering of multiple creatures (8:20).	93. The first reference to wine (Gen 9:21).
15. First Man (Gen 3:19)	39. First wanderer or vagabond (Gen 4:12)	62. First reference to the gathering and storage of food (Gen 6:21).	78. First time God is said to have been pleased with an offering (Gen 8:21).	94. The first reference to a person becoming drunk (Gen 9:21).
16. First Warning (Gen 2:17)	40. First mark put on a man (Gen 4:15)	63. First reference to someone doing all that	79. First promise of continued seed time/harvest, summer/winter, day/night (Gen 8:22).	95. The first curse uttered by a man (Gen 9:25).
17. First Display of human wisdom (Gen 2:19-20)	41. First man to go out from the presence of the Lord (Gen 4:16)			96. The first blessing uttered by a man (Gen 9:26).
18. First Woman (Gen 2:21-22)	42. First city built (Gen 4:17)			97. The first reference to a
19. First Marriage (Gen 2:22-24)	43. First case of bigamy (Gen 4:19)			
20. First Exposure to Satan (Gen 3:1)	44. First instance of retaliation (Gen 4:23)			
21. First Temptation (Gen 3:1-5)	45. First human substitute (Gen 4:25)			
22. First delusion (Gen 3:6)	46. First genealogy (Gen 5:1-32)			
23. First Sin (Gen 3:8)	47. First unequal yoke (Gen 6:2)			
24. First Knowledge of nakedness and its shame				

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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).
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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, men, the devil, and 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

behold the Divine nature 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.

ONE LANGUAGE

Gen 11:1 **"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."**

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 Cain's generation was removed, the spirit of it was not.

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 of that is consigned to "the bondage of corruption." **This circumstance 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 that "this present evil world," that beginning will not be sustained.** Now, we are introduced to the first revealed example of this fact.

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 while world." ^{GNB}

The word "earth" has the following basic lexical meaning: אָרֶצַּת 'ERETS {EH'-RETS} **MEANING:** 1) LAND, EARTH 1A) EARTH 1A1) WHOLE EARTH (AS OPPOSED TO A PART)

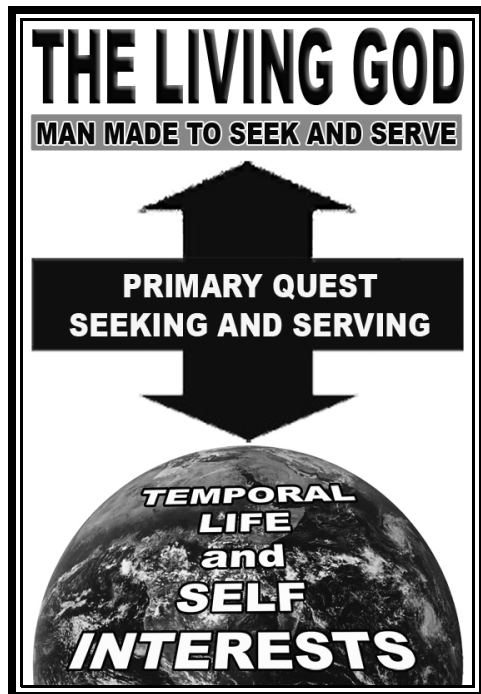
1A2) EARTH (AS OPPOSED TO HEAVEN).^{STRONG'S}

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

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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 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.

However, we are not hearing much about the pollution that has resulted from man’s preference of self. 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.

ONE LANGUAGE

“ . . . was of one language . . . ” 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 circumstance. No name is given to the language, for in our text the 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.

In our text, we will find that God did not want this self-centered project to continue. Therefore, He will render an appropriate judgment that will guarantee the cessation of the work.

The Appointed Outcome

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 language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent” (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.

- ➔ "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}
- ➔ "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,**

Can it be that the plethora of Bible Versions is God confounding the people because of their distance from Him?

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 to 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 just 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 spoken to 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?

WHY BRING THIS UP?

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.**

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.

THEY FOUND A PLAIN

"² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

they dwelt there."

There is no specific time 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.

- ➔ Hosea's vision of the punishment of Israel (Hosea 2:3)–*"an appointed time."*
- ➔ The duration of the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron 36:2; Jer 25:11,12) – *"seventy years."*
- ➔ When the Babylonian captivity ended (Jer 9:10; Dan 9:2)– "that He would accomplish the seventy years"
- ➔ A time when the saints will possess the kingdom (Dan 7:32)– *"the time*

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.

AS THEY JOURNEYED FROM THE EAST

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east . . ." 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.

- ➔ *"migrated from the east"* NRSV/RSV/CSB/TNK/NET/NIB
- ➔ *"moved eastward"* NIV
- ➔ *"wandering from the east"* BBE
- ➔ *"removed from the east"* DOUAY
- ➔ *"journeyed east"* ERV/JPS/NAU
- ➔ *"wandered about in the east"* GNB
- ➔ *"traveled from the east"* CJB
- ➔ *"journeyed from the east"* KJV/NKJV/DARBY/ ESV/RWB/WEB/YLT/ABP
- ➔ *"went from the east"* GENEVA
- ➔ *"moved from the east"* SEPTUAGINT
- ➔ *"migrating in the east"* NAB
- ➔ *"moved eastwards"* NJB
- ➔ *"migrated to the east"* NLT
- ➔ *"moved from the east"* CEV
- ➔ *"pulled up stakes from the east"* LITV
- ➔ *"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



- ➔ The Noah and his family entered the ark (Gen 7:13) – *"selfsame day."*
- ➔ When Isaac was born (Gen 17:21)– *"set time."*
- ➔ The plagues brought upon Egypt (Ex 9:5)– *"a set time"* (Ex 9:5).
- ➔ The time of Israel's deliverance (Ex 12:41,51)–*"selfsame day."*
- ➔ The days of man upon earth– (Job 7:1; 14:14)*"an appointed time."*

- came."*
 - ➔ The birth of Jesus (Gal 4:4)– *"the fulness of the time."*
 - ➔ The day of Pentecost, when the New Covenant was inaugurated (Acts 2:1)– *"was fully come."*
 - ➔ 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

(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 Caneh, which were between Ararat and Shinar.

The Significance of the East

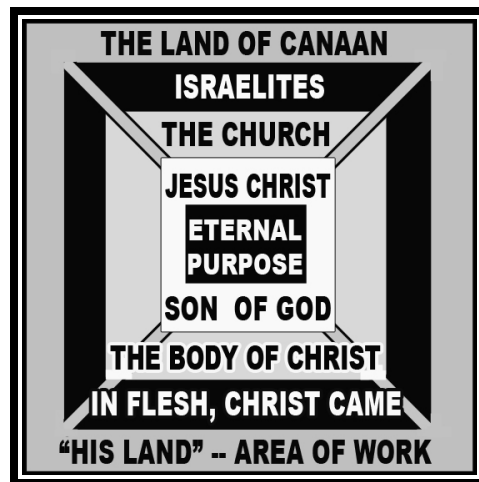
The east is significant in the Scriptures, being mentioned 157 times.

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

man from the east” (Isa 41:2), and *“a ravenous bird from the east”* (Isa 46:11).

➔ In declaring the judgment of Babylon, God referred to them as *“the men of the east”* (Isa 49:28).

Ultimately, in this, the 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 ultimate lay down His life, to take it up again.

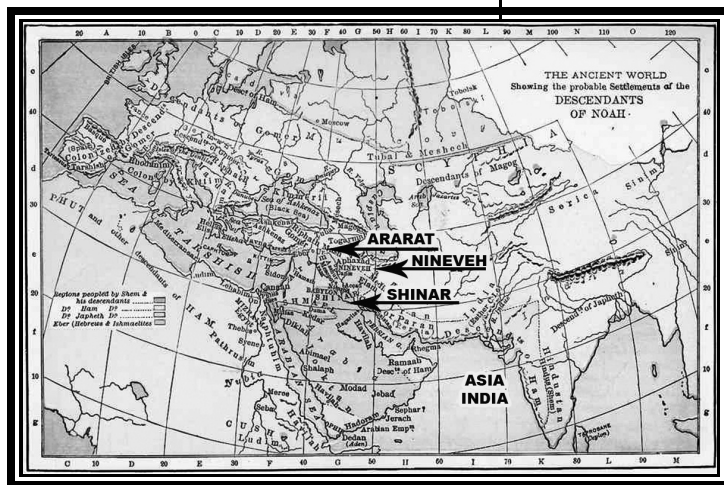
Other Centralities

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

- ➔ **Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** 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.
- ➔ The means through which Jesus works is **His church** – which is called *“the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Eph 1:23).
- ➔ **The Israelites** are the next consideration. The tutoring Law of God will come through 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.

➔ **Canaan**, the land of promise forms the last circumference. As depicted in the chart on this page, the purpose is from the inside out. The experience is from the outside in. 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



The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

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 was “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.

A Lesson to Be Learned

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.

Why Are Men Generally ignorant of The Fact and Place 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. There is a reason for this circumstance.

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

- ➔ 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.
- ➔ Second, God withdraws from men, hiding Himself behind the cloud of the visible. The combination of these two things make it impossible for men to find God, **unless** He makes Himself known to them.

For these reasons, the record we now encounter reveals no pressing interest in God Himself. Men are self-centered, and proceed in life just as though there was no God at all.

THEY FOUND A PLAIN

“ . . . that they found a plain in the land of Shinar . . . ” Other versions read, “*the came upon a valley,*”^{NAB} and “*a level valley.*”^{LITV}

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} “*lived*

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 on 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,*

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.

there,”^{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** (Gen 9:1). Considering the ultimate objective of God to garner a people “*out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*” (Rev 5:9), this 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.**

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).

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.

There is no evidence that such revelations were vouchsafed to those blessed saints. **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.**

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 own. 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.

“LET US . . .”

“³ 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. ⁴ 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.”

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 for man. Nimrod seized the power, but here is a harmonious group that determine to do something. If the test of a good project is whether or not the people are united in it, this will surely be a good work.

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 consensus of the people. 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.

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 inquiring of the Lord.

In this text, no one of record thought of inquiring of the Lord what would be the best thing to do. That simply is not what flesh does.

BRICK FOR STONE AND SLIME FOR MORTAR

“Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had

brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.”

“Go To . . .”

Other versions read, *“Come,”* ^{NKJV} *“give help,”* ^{YLT} and *“come on.”* ^{GNB}

The words *“go to”* are translated from a single Hebrew word with the following meaning: **נָחַם** {YAW-HAB} **MEANING:** 1) TO GIVE, PROVIDE, ASCRIBE, COME 1A) (QAL) 1A1) TO GIVE 1A2) TO SET, PLACE 1A3) TO PROVIDE (WITH REFLEXIVE) 1A4) TO ASCRIBE (GLORY) 1A5) 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).

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.

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).

And what will the people do with these bricks and mortar?

LET US BUILD US A CITY AND A TOWER

“And they said . . . let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven . . .” Other version s 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^{G2532} 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.

A City

This was not the first city that was built. Cain is the first man to build a city (Gen 4:17). However, it could not have been of the supposed magnitude of this city. So far as the record is concerned, it is distinctly possible that

this was the entire human race. In fact, the entire account lends itself to this view.

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.



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 that 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.

Ambitions are Noted in Heaven

It is true that human ambitions are noted in heaven – just as surely as Satan’s corrupt aspirations were perceived and evaluated by the Lord. **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

COMMENTS ON THE TOWER

“THIS TOWER IS COMMONLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE TEMPLE OF BELUS, WHICH HERODOTUS DESCRIBES (1. 181) AS BEING QUADRANGULAR (TWO STADIA EACH WAY), AND HAVING GATES OF BRASS, WITH A SOLID TOWER IN THE MIDDLE, CONSISTING OF EIGHT SECTIONS, EACH A STADIUM [607-738 FEET, OR 60-73 STORES HIGH] IN HEIGHT, PLACED ONE ABOVE ANOTHER, ASCENDED BY A SPIRAL STAIRCASE, AND HAVING IN THE TOP SECTION A SPACIOUS TEMPLE WITH A GOLDEN TABLE AND A WELLFURNISHED BED. PARTIALLY DESTROYED BY XERXES (B.C. 490), IT WAS ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO BE REBUILT BY ALEXANDER THE GREAT; BUT THE REMAINING PORTION OF THE EDIFICE WAS KNOWN TO BE IN EXISTENCE FIVE CENTURIES LATER, AND WAS SUFFICIENTLY IMPOSING TO BE RECOGNIZED AS THE TEMPLE OF BELUS (PLINY, 6:30).” PULPIT COMMENTARY

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). Jeremiah 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. 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).

Men must learn to reckon on this reality. Their plans and purposes are seen and evaluated by God.

LET US MAKE US A NAME

“ . . . and let us make us a name . . .” 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. 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 apparently no talk about God among the people. Apparently 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.

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*

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).

Boiled down to its essence, the pride of life is shaping ones life so that a high regard in the world can be obtained.

Those who exalt the “*dreams*” of men, or their secret ambitions, do well to bring that thought under the prevailing thought of God Himself. That 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.

- ➔ 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.
- ➔ 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.
- ➔ 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. However it was done, it indicates that, so far as those making this determinations were concerned, certain things that were known of God were eventually pushed out of the human mind. This includes the remarkable epochs of creation, men being cast out of the Garden, and the flood.

The Nature of the Flesh

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 can see in the various translations that “*the pride of life*” is a very large matter. **Boiled down to its essence, it is shaping ones life so that a high regard in the world can be obtained.** Because of the nature of the flesh, this has a lot to do with possessions, for that is what the world sees and values the most.

The people in our text 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 the desired fame of their peers.**

The Devil

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:*

Satan’s “*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).

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 it what they gave. They sought to appear more noble before men than they actually were. Their effort to appear great before men was not assessed as being accomplished in 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).

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,*”^{NRSV} and “*dispersed over the face of the whole earth.*”^{ESV}

The impact of forgetting God is seen in this expression. The people reasoned as though their destiny was to be found 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.

Men Are Creative

By nature, men are creative. That is involved in being created in the image

of God. Outside of Christ, however, man’s creativity tends toward corruption. Even supposedly beneficial things become obsolete, and can be grossly abused. However, sin has made men unaware of this reality.

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

➔ “Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions” (Psa 99:8). “Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them” (Psa 106:29). “Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions” (Psa 106:39).

In this case, “Inventions” refers to flawed conduct – a manner of life they created in a preference for self.

➔ “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they

Our text confirms the creative nature of man employed for ignoble purposes – to build a city and a tower in order to gain a name for themselves.

have sought out many inventions” (Eccl 7:29). Here the word ranges from “devices” ^{NASB-STRONG’S} to “schemes.” ^{NKJV}

➔ **Our text confirms the creative nature of man employed for ignoble purposes – to build a city and a tower in order to gain a name for themselves.**

They also assumed longevity, as well as seeking safety by means of human innovation.

Whether they were aware of it or not, they were resisting God. They ignored their conscience and proceeded

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.

THE LORD CAME DOWN TO SEE

“ ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.”

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 devoted His attention to something or someone. It is always a prelude to God doing something. There are several occasions during which this language is employed.

➔ **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.

➔ **THE MORAL DEGRADATION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.** “I will go down now” to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 20-21). This also was a prelude to a judgment.

➔ **AT THE GIVING OF THE LAW.** “The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai” (Ex 19:20). In this case, the Law was given.

➔ **WHEN REVEALING HIMSELF TO MOSES.** “Lord descended” (Ex 34:5). This was a special revelation of God’s Person to Moses.

➔ **WHEN DISTRIBUTING SOME OF THE SPIRIT 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.

➔ **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 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.

TO SEE THE CITY AND THE TOWER

“ . . . to see the city and the tower . . . ” Other version reads “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).

The expression “Let us” denoted the multiplicity of personalities in the Godhead. The term “Us” is used at least five times as a reference to Deity.

- ➔ “Let **Us** make man in Our image” (Gen 1:26).
- ➔ “Behold the man is become as one of **Us** . . .” (Gen 3:22).
- ➔ “Let **Us** go down and there confound their language” (Gen 11:7).
- ➔ “Whom shall We send, and who will go for **Us** ” (Isa 6:9).
- ➔ 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

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,” ^{RVB} and “the secret of the God and Father, and of the Christ.” ^{YLT}

The multiplicity of versions do not do well with this text. Most of them represent the “mystery” being what God had purposed, which was manifested in Christ. Others say that Christ Jesus Himself IS the mystery of God. In my judgment, these versions have missed the point.

The mystery pertains to God, not what He is doing. The references to “Us” and “We” were not at all clear before and under the Old Covenant. The

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.

WHICH THE CHILDREN OF MEN BUILDED

“ . . . which the children of men builded.”

Keep in mind that this language is adapted to our human frailty. The idea here is that of focusing upon the situation. **The time had come for the Lord to do something about this situation, and He will reveal that in a manner that is conducive to understanding.**

God Takes Note of Human Innovations

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

- ➔ Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their moral conduct (Gen 18:20-21; 19:24-28).
- ➔ Jehosaphat made ships to go to Ophir for gold, but “but they never set sail--they were wrecked at Ezion Geber” ^{NIV} (1 Kgs 22:48).

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**

Admittedly, there is an element of mystery to all of this, but it is only so perceived by men. Even then, those who are in Christ Jesus do not need to have difficulty in this matter.

all referred to as “God.”

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

Admittedly, there is an element of mystery to all of this, but it is only so perceived by men. 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,

concepts of the Father and the Son, together with the Spirit, were not developed. There were only allusions to the intra-relationships of the Father, Son, and 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. 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

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.

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 is the alternative.

THE POTENTIAL OF BEING UNITED

" 6 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 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 men could do. This text is a case in point.

Here was something the people set out to do. 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 – the "Governor among the nations" (Psa 22:28).

BEHOLD, THE PEOPLE IS ONE

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language . . ."

It is imperative that we note that this is a Divine assessment. It is not a human conclusion, but one spoken by the Lord.

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 built 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

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 man, 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.**

AND THIS THEY BEGIN TO DO

" . . . and this they begin to do . . ." Other versions read, "and this they began to do," ^{NASB} "they have begun to do this," ^{NIV} "and this is only the

If there is no underlying purpose for the existence of both the world and man, 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.

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.**

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} "and this it hath dreamed of doing," ^{YLT} and "they have

just begun to exploit their linguistic and political unity, just think of what they will do later!" ^{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. This was only their **FIRST PROJECT**. How will the Lord assess it?

NOTHING SHALL BE RESTRAINED

" . . .and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have

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}

Again, 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. God Almighty stated that, because the people were perfectly united and spoke the same language, they would be able to do anything they desired. That is, if the assessment of

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.

If God is really not in control, as some allege, this project would have been completed, just as the Lord said.

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 (Acts 19:10), opening men's eyes to the truth (Acts 26:18), and throwing down erroneous thinking (2 Cor 10:5). **Large and challenging thoughts should not be exclusive to worldly men.**

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

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

If God is really not in control, as some allege, this project would have been completed, just as the Lord said.

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*

the situation was not managed from above. Further, it is the truth, for God "cannot lie" (Tit 1:2).

The Blight of Small Thinking

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

LET US CONFOUND THEIR LANGUAGE

" 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Here is the Lord's reaction – the entire Godhead (*"let Us"*) – to the ambitions of the united people. God is obviously displeased with what He saw. There are several possible reasons for this.

- ➔ The Lord did not complement the people for a noble work. No *"well done"* here!
- ➔ 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.

- ➔ 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}

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? God is said determine to confound men's speech so they cannot understand one another. It is something He will cause to happen,

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

whether men consent to it or not. In fact, they will have no option – no opportunity to make a choice.

God knows this, although men are reluctant to receive it, if not thoroughly opposed to the idea. 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.

Let us not leave this section



without observing that God can cause

people to be unable to understanding 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.

SO, THE LORD SCATTERED THEM

8a So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth . . ."

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} *"So the Lord dispersed them,"* ^{ESV} *"God scattered them all over the earth."* ^{LIVING} Most versions, with these few exceptions, read *"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.

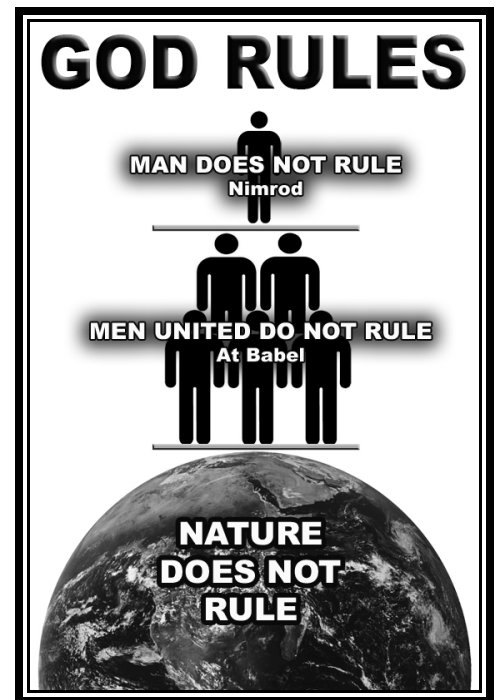
This is, in fact, the method God used to place the people. Moses spoke of the dispersion in this way, *"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel"* (Deut 32:8). Paul 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).

Thus the people of the world will ultimately be occupied by a diversity of people. They will 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. 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 obtain of salvation, its privileges, and the ministries of edification and comfort.**

RECALLING THE DAY OF PENTECOST

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 He divided the people by different tongues, or languages. On Pentecost the people were united by a speaking in tongues. A single message was spoken, and it was delivered and heard in several differing languages (Acts 2:4,11). 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. They all heard and obeyed the same message. Thus a preliminary example took place that fulfilled the prophecy of Zephaniah, that the Lord would turn to the people in a pure language, and a single language (Zeph 3:9).

THEY LEFT OFF TO BUILD THE CITY

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

^{8b} “. . . and they left off to build the city.” 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 14:28).

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. 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.

This is not the way it may have appeared. It may have looked 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.

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. That purpose will prevail!

THE NAME OF THE CITY

⁹ *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.”*

Here, then, is a work of God – a response to a work of man. It is a work that involved changing the way people spoke, causing confusion, and bringing what appeared to be an impressive project to an abrupt conclusion. It resulted in the scattering of the people “upon the face of all the earth.”

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, 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 project, and for His ministry – saving, mediating, interceding, and bringing many sons to

glory.

Genesis 10:10, it is always translated

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.

THE NAME OF THE CITY

“The name of the city is called Babel.” Other versions read, “Babylon,” ^{CSB} “Confusion.” ^{SEPTUAGINT}

The lexical meaning of the word “Babel” is as follows: ~~XXX~~ ~~N~~ ~~N~~ BABEL {BAW-BEL} MEANING: BABEL OR BABYLON = “CONFUSION (BY MIXING)” 1) BABEL OR BABYLON, THE ANCIENT SITE AND/OR CAPITAL OF BABYLONIA (MODERN HILLAH) SITUATED ON THE EUPHRATES

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

“Babylon.” This is true of all standard versions. Babylon is “THE GREEK FORM OF BABEL.” ^{EASTONS 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 working 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 a city that was shown to John on the Isle of Patmos.

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

THE PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL BABYLON

This account will give us some understanding of the nature of spiritual Babylon – a subject developed at length in the book of the Revelation.

The twelfth chapter of 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

“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).

Now, at this point I want to briefly develop why and how Babylon the Great was formed. God was in the process, just as surely as He was in the plain of Shinar.

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*

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.

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. 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).

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 in bringing many sons to glory.

The woman, now depicting the

violently expelled from heaven, together with his angels (Rev 12:7-9). In response, a loud voice was heard from 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. *“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:

tears” (Acts 20:31).

Paul himself was a kind of spiritual barrier to the rise of these men. It was not merely his presence, 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.** Thus Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders about what would happen after he left them.

He refers to the intruders 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.

THEY SPOKE WITH DECEPTIVE UNITY

There is a very subtle thread of unity that unites all of the ministers of Babylon the Great. It is stated in this way⁷ by the apostles: “*They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them*” (1 John 4:5).

They use “*covetousness*” to attract the people – a desire for the things of this world (2 Pet 2:2). The object coveted ranges from favorable domestic circumstances, to 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.

GOD TOOK NOTE OF THEIR EFFORTS AND DISPERSED THE PEOPLE

Here is the very matter 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 “*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. 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.

God has used this fractured language to divide the people, so that they cannot complete the work on Babylon the Great. This is the very thing to which Paul alluded when he wrote to the 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.

CONCLUSION

Thus the first joint project of man was brought to an abrupt conclusion. God Himself terminated it because it was for the wrong purpose – for the glory of man instead of the glory of God. He has done this throughout history, aborting the efforts of men to exalt themselves.

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), 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); Herod (Acts 12:21).

In all of these judgments, it was the will of the Lord that dominated, and

The conditions appeared ideal: one language and a perfect unity. Yet, mankind was clearly seen to be self centered – Given O. Blakely

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.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/23/11. We will continue our series of lessons on the book of Genesis. The eighteenth lesson will cover verses 10-32 of chapter Eleven: “THE GENERATIONS OF SETH.” This genealogy paves the way for the introduction of Abraham. From chapter twelve through the end of the Scriptures, the subject matter will center in Abraham and his seed – particularly the “Seed.” In the genealogy, the choice of God is once again made evident. He is orchestrating the affairs of the earth in view of His eternal purpose, which involved the extensive the extensive revelation of His grace and wisdom. These traits had not been seen in their magnitude prior to the creation of the earth. Now, through a series of events involving a fallen race, God will work out His purpose, displaying beyond all question His own Sovereignty within the framework of His work among men – created in His image, yet fallen from a place of acceptance. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship: <http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>

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COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

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COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Malachi.htm>

COMMENTARY on Galatians: <http://wotruth.com/Galatiansindex-new.htm>

COMMENTARY on Genesis: <http://wotruth.com/Genesis.htm>

COMMENTARY on Ephesians: <http://wotruth.com/Ephesians.htm>