

“The City Whose Builder and Maker is God”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from a chart by Del Wininger)

Introduction:

- A. The account of the building of the tower of Babel is brief but it is important.
 - 1. This story has been repeated millions of times on many occasions in hundreds of nations throughout the course of history.
 - 2. We need this lesson today - Ecc. 1:9 - “That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun”
 - 3. Just as the people involved in building Babel's tower, 21st century man has problems with exaltation of human wisdom, power, & achievement
- B. The account of the colossus on the Shinar Plain:
 - 1. The people were united by a single purpose facilitated by a common language; they wanted to build a great tower at Babel in Shinar to:
 - a. Make a name for themselves,
 - b. To avoid dispersion throughout the world.
 - 2. God intervened because both purposes were contrary to His will
 - a. He ended the project and dispersed the people by taking away what empowered them to undertake the task: He took away their common language.
- C. Background information: What happened on the Plain of Shinar (Sumer)?
 - 1. Gen. 10:5 follows the genealogies of Noah and tells of the distributions of land and dispersion of the peoples under various rulers and great families after the flood ended and humans began again to proliferate on the earth. It seems to imply that the dispersion occurred before the incident at the Tower of Babel. It is simply a reference to the future of the descendants of Noah. The balance of the chapter continues in the same manner.
 - 2. Gen. 10:8-10 states that Babel formed part of Nimrod's kingdom. The Bible does not specifically mention that Nimrod ordered the building of the tower, but other sources associate its construction with Nimrod.
 - 3. Genesis 11:1-9 reveals an expanded account of 10:5 by giving the reason for the dispersion. Otherwise, one would wonder what brought about the dispersion and language changes. But God does not reveal it to satisfy curiosity; there is a profound moral lesson in this account.
 - 4. The Hebrew version of the name Babel, is from the verb balal, which means to confuse or confound in Hebrew. The Hebrew noun form babal means confusion.
 - 5. The Book of Jubilees contains one of the most detailed accounts found anywhere of the Tower. It must be understood that this is speculative and suspect. “And they began to build, and in the fourth week they made brick with fire, and the bricks served them for stone, and the clay with which they cemented them together was asphalt which comes out of the sea, and out of the fountains of water in the land of Shinar. And they built it: forty and three years were they building it; its breadth was 203 bricks, and the height was the third of one; its height amounted to 5433 cubits and 2

palms (8150 feet; over 1.5 miles), and the extent of one wall was thirteen stades (7800 feet; just under 1.5 miles) (600 feet per stade), and of the other was thirty stades (18,000 feet; 3.4 miles)." (Jubilees 10:20-21, Charles' 1913 translation) Considering the design and materials, it could only have been built to a height of 1.3 miles before the bricks at the bottom were crushed by the weight of the tower.

6. Lest anyone think it just a Bible story and take it lightly, there are 16 other places around the world that have a Tower of Babel account in their myths. They appear to hark back to a time when they knew humankind had a common language - a protolingua.

7. Sumerian myth of the Tower of Babel, called Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, where Enmerkar of Uruk is building a massive ziggurat in Eridu and demands a tribute of precious materials from Aratta for its construction, at one point reciting an incantation imploring the god Enki to disrupt the linguistic unity of the inhabited regions; Lozi, Ashanti, Kongo, Tanzania, Karbi Kuki people of Assam, Karen people of Myanmar, the Admiralty Islands, the Tharu of Nepal and northern India; the Greek myth that Hermes confused the languages, causing Zeus to give his throne to Phoroneus, the Wasania of Kenya, the Kacha Naga people of Assam, the inhabitants of Encounter Bay in Australia, the Maidu native Americans of California, the Tlingit of Alaska, and the K'iche' Maya of Central America

8. The account in Genesis makes no mention of any destruction of the tower. The people whose languages are confounded simply stop building their city, and are scattered from there over the face of the Earth. Erosion over time would account for some of its disappearance; the constant reuse of building materials, especially fired bricks which were an expensive commodity in those days, accounts for the rest. (Wikipedia, et al)

9. The location of the Tower of Babel is completely unknown.

I. THE CITY WHOSE BUILDERS AND MAKERS WERE MEN

A. They wanted to make a name for themselves - Gen. 11:4

1. What hubris! God said of Adam and said to Noah that man was made by God in His image.

2. What is the first commandment God gave Noah when he descended from the ark? - Gen. 9:1, 7

B. They wanted a city - Gen. 11:4

1. Cain built a city and his descendants lived there, and all of Cain's descendants died in the flood.

2. God said to scatter and fill the earth, not build a city.

3. Foreshadows men trying to preempt God by doing what He has planned for humankind; Abraham & Ishmael; David and the cedar house for God

C. They wanted to build a tower to reach to the heavens - Gen. 11:3-4

1. Created a focal point to bring people to their city instead of filling the earth.

2. Created a structure as a visible testimony of their arrogance.

D. God confused their languages and scattered them - Gen. 11:5-9

III. THE CITY WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD

- A. It is not an accident that the next thing discussed in Genesis is God preparing Abraham to be the first seeker of the "City Whose Builder and Maker is God."
 - 1. Heb. 11:8-10
- B. God will build a city with a tower to draw the people together
 - 1. John 12:32; Heb. 12:22-23
- C. God will give them a name for themselves - Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26

IV. THE LESSONS

- A. Where people gather in large numbers for their own purposes, the potential of sin increases
 - 1. Rom. 3:23 - Sin is the constant problem of man.
 - 2. Men must purpose to do God's will - Heb. 13:16
- B. God's will is to be obeyed regardless of circumstances.
 - 1. We don't know why they didn't initially want to separate.
 - 2. Perhaps they loved their families.
 - 3. Perhaps they wanted to be a great people.
 - 4. Perhaps they wanted the easy life.
 - 5. They eventually came to want to "make a name" for themselves.
 - 6. Whatever the reason, God's will was not obeyed.
 - 7. Heb. 5:9
- C. Pride will always cause us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.
 - 1. The people together increased a foolhardy kind of confidence
 - 2. They didn't think that there was anything they couldn't or shouldn't do.
 - 3. They wanted to make a name for themselves; perhaps they thought that if they did, then God wouldn't separate them.
 - 4. Pride causes us to behave in ways we normally would not - Rom. 12:3
- D. God's plans will not be stopped - 1Cor. 1:20-21
- E. No society is so great that it can undo God's will.
 - 1. Where is Babylon? The Roman Empire? Greece? Persia? Sodom and Gomorrah? The people of Babel? The former Soviet Union?
- F. A society that opposes God is not a society that will exist long - Dan. 4:34-35
- G. God's punishments are just.
 - 1. By changing their languages, the people dispersed; which was what God wanted all along - Gen. 18:25
- H. The people of God came from the tower of Babel.
 - 1. Gen. 11:14-17 - Eber, from whom the Hebrews descended, lived the longest of anyone born after the flood, perhaps the reward for careful adherence to the ways of God.
 - 2. Righteous men can exist in wicked environments - Noah, Abraham

Conclusion:

- A. We need to look for and enter into the city whose builder and maker is God
- B. Heb. 11:13-16