

Lesson 29

The Tower Of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9

I. INTRODUCTION

A. In chapter 10, a record of the migrating of different peoples from Japheth, Ham and Shem was given, and it would be only natural to give some explanation of the great variety of different languages and dialects that are found in the world and how these languages originated.

B. Many scholars think that Genesis 11:1-9 actually precedes the scattering of peoples in Genesis 10. Genesis 10 tells us *what* and Genesis 11 tells us *why*.

II. THE RELIGION BEHIND THE TOWER OF BABEL 11:1-4

A. **“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”** In the new beginning after the Flood, there was a unity among all the people of the earth. They all spoke the same language. NOTE. Perhaps this event took place around 150 years after the Flood. The Hebrew scholar Keil estimates that the population was about 30,000. Figuring from Noah’s three sons, he calculated eight children to each family in every generation at 30-35 year intervals.

B. **“... journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.”** The key to this section is found in the words “in the land of Shinar” for this immediately takes us back to Genesis 10:8-10 where it talks about Nimrod who settled in the area of Shinar (Babylon). Apparently he was a demon- possessed tyrant who made the first attempt to unify the total population of the earth into a political entity. He did this by uniting the people, who already spoke the same language, into a religious unity. Nimrod set up a rival religion to the one true God. Nimrod, which means “rebel” was the arch-apostate of the post-deluvian world.

1. Nimrod’s History. The beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel or Babylon (10:10). Babel had as its original meaning “gate of God.” Nimrod was running from God and he went to Babylon to remove himself not only from the fact of God’s revelation but the place of revelation. Nimrod was going to build a false religious system that would be the new gate or approach to God. According to Genesis 11, it was in Shinar (Babylon) that the Tower of Babel was built, for he was going to build a tower by his own works that would reach God. It was a substitute for the one true religion. NOTE. Babel introduced the first organized idolatrous religious system in the history of the world. Babylonians did not want God at the center of their system. They wanted idolatry and set up a system opposed to God.

2. Nimrod’s Religion. Secular history shows that Nimrod married a girl named Semerimus. Semerimus became the high priestess of the Babylonian mysteries, which consisted of sacred religious rites which were developed as a part of the worship of idols in Babylon. The revelation of the true God was carried in those days by oral tradition, and Semerimus, even though a rejecter of God, knew God’s promise of Genesis 3:15 to send Messiah through woman’s seed, and Semerimus set out to corrupt and counterfeit God’s promise. According to extra biblical records, Semerimus bore a son Tammuz, and claimed that he was the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, being conceived in a miraculous way. Tammuz was considered a savior of his people and was, in effect, a false messiah, purported to be the fulfillment of the promise to Eve. The symbol of this apostate religion of Semerimus and Tammuz was a figure of a mother holding a child in her arms. It was the mother-child cult. The basic teachings of this cult are as follows:

- a. Semerimus set herself as a way of approach to God, and one had to go through Semerimus to God.
- b. Because of the miraculously born child she held in her arms, Semerimus felt she could give life. She called herself the Queen of Heaven (cf. Jer. 44; Ezk. 8).
- c. She taught that salvation was by good works and by the sacraments of water and ceremonial cleansing.
- d. She taught that there was ultimate cleansing after death in a place she called purgatory.
- e. She established an order of virgins dedicated to religious prostitution, and there was an earthly male priesthood to further the mother-child cult.
- f. She taught that her child was killed by a wild beast, but after 40 days of fasting, Tammuz was resurrected from the dead. Tammuz's resurrection was celebrated each year by 40 days of lent (sacrifice) and there was a big feast. This feast was called the Feast of Ishtar. The egg was set aside as sacred to Tammuz, which was exchanged on the Feast of Ishtar as the symbol of life out of death. These were called Ishtar eggs.
- g. The evergreen tree, the symbol of life, was made the symbol of Tammuz; and it was prominently displayed in mid-winter in the month of December, the supposed birthday of Tammuz.
- h. She taught that relics, images, holy water, lamps and wax candles were all part of the worship of the mystery cult.
- i. The Queen of Heaven was worshipped by offering a round cake that was marked by the letter "T" which in Babylonian, and later in the Phoenician, alphabet was an "X". These crossed buns or cakes were offered to Tammuz and Semerimus at the Feast of Ishtar. The second symbol of the mother-child cult was a cross like a "T".

3. The Spread of Nimrod's Religion. Nimrod's religion spread throughout the ancient nations, the names may have been changed but the characters and worship were essentially the same. The mother-child cult spread to Phoenicia and the characters were called Ashteroth and Tammuz. Here the worship of the sun was added and all was done under the worship of Baal. In Egypt, the characters were called Isis and Hornus. In Greece they were called Aphrodite and Eros and in Rome they were named Venus and Cupid. In India the Hindus have Ushas and Vishnu. NOTE: The cult has also crept into Christianity and forms the basis for the Mariolatry that has prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church, where the Mother and Child are worshipped as joint redeemers, NOTE. The final form of world religion will be a revived form of Nimrod's religion, which began in Babylon (Rev. 17). This is why that final form of religion is called, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Just as this early anti-God union centered in Babylon the final anti-God movement will center in a Babylon system of greater magnitude.

C. **"... Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar."** These early people were ingenious, for they learned how to fire brick and use some kind of tar or pitch for mortar. NOTE. Nimrod was a Hamite and the Hamites were the technicians of humanity, technologically gifted people,

D. **"And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the world earth."**

1. A City. Man, seeking unity and power, sees the way to do it is to have a city. This was to be a big population center where political power could be manipulated. This city was organized in order not to obey God, for God had told men to scatter over the earth and populate it (Gen.

9:1). This verse tells us that they refused to scatter (11:4) and they were acting in defiance of God Himself.

2. A Tower. They built this tower as the basis for a new religion and a rallying point for the population of that city. The word "tower" is a word that can mean *ziggurat*, which means "pinnacle" or "mountain top." At Babel, the first ziggurat was built and it was a symbol of the whole anti-God religion of these early Babylonians (Sumerians). NOTE. No one as yet, can definitely pinpoint through archeology the Tower of Babel, but there are other ziggurats, which have been discovered which many scholars feel were patterned after the original Tower of Babel. One such temple is that of Nebo at Borsippa usually called Birs Nimrud. This tower has seven stages, each stage of a different color. Beginning at the bottom, the first stage was black (for Saturn), the second brownish red (for Jupiter), the third rose red (for Mars), the fourth golden (for the sun), the fifth whitish yellow (for Venus), the sixth dark blue (for Mercury), and the seventh silver (for the moon). At the top was a lofty tower, which contained the signs of the zodiac and other astrological figures. Also in the top stage the shrine and image of the city's patron deity were housed. NOTE. From these ziggurats, we discover that astrology was also a part of this first apostate religion. Priests would gaze at the stars from the top of these towers. Hal Lindsey comments,

The origin of astrology was described in what may have been among the first writing known to man, a form of hieroglyphics devised by the ancient race of the Chaldeans who began to give the stars certain meanings. They divided the heavens into the twelve sections of the Zodiac and said that the stars control the destiny of men. This religion started to flourish and have its greatest glory of history in the Babylonian Empire, which was primarily made up of the priestly cast of the Chaldean people (*The Late Great Planet Earth*).

3. Name. This city, tower and religion were built to exalt man and not to glorify God. This whole system was built on humanism and left God out of the picture. It was a false, substitute religion that was counterfeit for the one true religion.

III. THE REASON FOR THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES 11:5-6

A. **"And the Lord came down to see the tower, which the children of men builded."** This is an anthropomorphic expression for God knew all the time what was happening. But it does convey the thought that God stands amazed at the apostasy of men.

B. **"... and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."** God had to stop them in their apostasy or there would be no limit to the evil they might do.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE TOWER OF BABEL 11:7-9

A. **"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language..."** The Lord judges by giving them various languages, so now they are forced to break off from one another and form different groups by language.

B. **"So the Lord scattered them abroad..."** God did not want one religious and political unity headed up by a dictator. This passage seems to indicate that God's plan for the world until the Prince of Peace returns is not an international one-world government, but nationalism. NOTE. The future anti-Christ or world dictator will come to power through this one world religious system that is to come to the earth (Lev. 17-18).

C. **"Therefore is the name of it called Babel..."** It was called Babel for it was here that God confused the languages of men. NOTE. It is most interesting that the confusion of tongues is most

evident, even today, in the Hamitic families of earth. Linguists know that most of the languages of earth can be gathered into family groups (e.g., the Indo-European family and the Semitic families). It is not too difficult to group the Japhetic and Semitic families, but to the Hamitic family language is utter confusion.
