

Babel & Its Antitype

I'd like to know where etymologists, people who study words and their origins, come up with where languages came from. Especially those who don't believe in the Bible's inspiration. They might say they began as grunts made by cavemen which developed into more sophisticated words over time but how exactly did speech begin, who invented it and in what form did it originate? The Bible gives the answer.

Exo 4:10 But **Moses** said to the **LORD**, "Oh, my **Lord**, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since **You** have spoken to **Your** servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." **11** Then the **LORD** said to him, "**Who** has made man's mouth? **Who** makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not **I**, the **LORD**?" **12** Now therefore go, and **I** will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

Obviously we believe communication has always existed since God has always existed and thus there had to have been communication within the Godhead. It was with such that all things physical were created, by speaking them into existence (*Gen 1:3, et al*). So what language or form of language did God use to speak the worlds into being? We're not told. But it would have to be obvious that He is Master of **all** languages since He is the creator of everything, even our speech, and thus was able to communicate His words throughout the history of the world, whether through the prophets or directly with man, as He did in the garden with the first humans. And it would be difficult to know which language Adam and Eve spoke, even if that specific language or a form of it still existed today. Just as those of us who are able to 'decipher' the KJV would have a hard time understanding it in its original form since the English language itself has undergone so many 'evolutions' since it was first understood as the English language. And so communication is a must. It was and is God's desire that we become better at it if we want to be able to first, get along, and second, if we wish to be better at sharing His word with a lost and dying world. And it must be noted that the number one cause of most marital breakdowns **is** a lack of communication, especially when attempting to resolve disputes. Therefore the need to communicate is of great necessity if spouses, families and governments are to get along living on the same planet.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

So let's now go back to Gen 11 to understand how there **was** an original language given to man in which to communicate and also to understand the origin of the manifold languages that exist today.

Gen 11:1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.

- This would have been after the ark settled on Mt. Ararat (8:4) and the descendants of **Noah** had begun replenishing the earth (9:1). If the world had remained of one language could you imagine the outcome of wars if every enemy spoke the same language? There would have been no need for interpreters to decipher communications obtained through spying and many wars might not have been fought to begin with. The language barriers that have existed because of the lack of communication, and thus other cultural differences, would never have been a factor. Everyone may have just gotten along. But would that have been a good thing?

Gen 11:2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks (*Heb.3843-brick [from the whiteness of the clay]*), and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen (*tar*) for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us **make a name for ourselves**, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

- Obviously there's a certain amount of arrogance shown when a group of people want to "make a name" for themselves. Such has been one of the main causes of wars where one nation desires to dominate another or even rule the world as Hitler and many others have been so arrogant in thinking they would have been able to do so. It is not God's desire that any one nation rule the world. But in the case of this tower being built by these people, it was evident to God that their self-conceit would have given them the confidence to think they didn't need Him to be so successful. He would later have to warn His people Judah through the prophet Jeremiah of their vanity in idol worship.

Jer 25:6 And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke Me not to anger with **the works of your hands**; and I will do you no hurt.

- Those who built the tower would have worshipped the work of their hands thinking God would have become obsolete in their progress to become a great nation and remain together in the plain there in Shinar. They weren't following His instructions to Noah and his family when He told them to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (*Gen 9:1*). If as one group of people they could be led to disobey God it was necessary to divide them so that, as many groups, it would be less likely that all would be affected by the sinful behavior of the few. Thus is the wisdom in the autonomous nature of the church. We have no hierarchy that might lead us according to man's instructions that don't align with the word of God as do the denominations. God has given His word as a roadmap where, if we just allow it to lead us down the path of righteousness, we won't be led astray by the false teachings of mere men.

Gen 11:5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

- "Only the beginning" shows how important communication is and "nothing" becoming "impossible for them" is a testament to that. So how could God, aside from destroying them along with the tower, show them the folly of what they tried to accomplish without punishing them into despair? He had to do something about their communications to each other that was essential in directing them to build since any construction project requires a certain amount of instructions **if** the project is to be successful.

Gen 11:7 Come, let Us go down and there **confuse their language**, so that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel (*Heb.894- confusion*), because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

- The incomplete tower was left as a reminder to them of their folly. It served as physical evidence of the origin of such phrases used to describe people who are "babbling" when

speaking incoherently. The apostle Paul was referred to as a “babbling” (*Act 17:18*) when he preached about the one God none of them heard of. They said “‘he seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’ –because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection”. “Babbling” has come to be understood as speaking the language of toddlers and crazy people who are talking gibberish. So when asked “what are you babbling about?” we understand the need to speak clearly if we want others to understand what we’re attempting to communicate. But sometimes the failure to comprehend what’s being said has nothing to do with the one speaking as much as it has to do with the person listening not wanting to understand what’s being said. It’s called ‘selective hearing’. It’s what happens to children who experience a momentary period of deafness when asked to clean their rooms or to husbands watching sports on television when asked to take out the trash or to wives when told there’s no room in the budget for **another** kitchen renovation. Jesus often reprimanded His audiences over such a lack of desire to discern.

Joh 8:43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear My word.

- Not that they **couldn’t** hear Him, they just didn’t **want** to hear what Jesus had to say about things that convicted them. And His followers would experience the same frustration.

Joh 17:14 I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

- But was it always to be where people were to remain in a constant state of confusion where we couldn’t understand each of the myriad of languages in the world? Remember the reason man was separated in the first place, because nothing would be impossible for him if he was able to communicate? Something had to change though. Especially when the world was becoming smaller through reaching other lands with the advances in highway construction and thus transportation under the Roman dominated world. Infrastructure not only became necessary to move troops and merchandise easier with the conquest of the then known world by the Roman Empire, it was also necessary to communicate faster in order to keep people better informed. Thus “when the fullness of time had come” (*Gal 4:4*) the gospel could be preached to “all nations” (*Mat 28:19*). But how was that possible since there were so many languages and not just one that everyone could understand? God had a plan.

Act 2:1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they (*the 12 apostles*) were all together in one place.

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (*Gk.1100- language*) as the Spirit gave them utterance (*Gk.669- to enunciate plainly*). 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men **from every nation under heaven**.

- Now was the opportunity to reach the masses with the message of the gospel. These were Jews who gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover who would return to their homes in Asia with messages concerning what they had experienced while away. “Every nation under heaven” meant the then known world. As they mingled among their Gentile neighbors the commission Jesus gave to “make disciples of all nations” (*Mat 28:19*) could then be accomplished.

Act 2:6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one (*each Jew who was a citizen of a specific foreign nation*) was **hearing them** (*each individual apostle*) **speak in his own language.**

- When **Peter** gave the first sermon to the collective group on that day, he wasn't speaking in several languages at the same time, nor were those of different dialects listening to **Peter's** speech in one language, as if they were all hearing it in their own. The rest of the apostles were also speaking of "the mighty works of **God**" through the dialects they were being guided in by **Holy Spirit**.

Act 2:7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all **these** who **are** speaking Galileans?"

- Just as in this country, we can all understand the English language but speak it through different accents depending on where we're from; north, south, east or west. Likewise with other languages. An American speaking French from the south might sound different from an American speaking French from the north. These Jews heard the apostles speaking their own native tongue, depending on what part of Asia they were from, but with a Galilean accent.

Act 2:8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? **9** Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, **11** both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of **God.**" **12** And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

- Speaking in each foreign language of the country these Jews represented was a mystery to them that got their attention. Thus one of the main reasons for "speaking in tongues". When adding 'proselytes' to the list of those who heard the apostles that day, it was obvious there were Jews who practiced evangelizing the message of the **Old Covenant**. That made them prime as proclaimers of the **New Testament** gospel. Now it was time to take that message of the kingdom to the world, to "every nation... all tribes and peoples and languages" (*Rev 7:9*). But how? How was **God** to accomplish something so grand as spreading people out to accomplish such a feat? **He** did it before, **He** could do it again.

The Dispersion

Jesus told the twelve while in Jerusalem that they would be His "**witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**" (*Act 1:8*). Jerusalem became the hub of the Christian world after Pentecost and it seemed those Jews from all over the world who were converted to the message of the gospel weren't going home to share their new found faith any time soon. They seemed excited to be there to witness such an event and weren't in any hurry to leave. But time was of the essence and another dispersion was necessary.

Act 8:1 And **Saul** approved of his (*Steven's*) execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all **scattered throughout** the regions of **Judea** and **Samaria**, except the apostles. **2** Devout men buried **Stephen** and made great lamentation over him. **3** But **Saul** was ravaging the church, and entering

house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. 4 Now those who were **scattered went about preaching** the word.

- Time and again we've heard of men coming to America to get an education to preach the gospel in their homelands only to have them stay here for better opportunities in self-improvement and higher paying ministries. Some from the north here have gone south to attend preaching schools in the brotherhood only to find ministries there and leave the more difficult works in the northeast to others who would find the challenge more rewarding than a higher standard of living. Such may have been one factor in Jerusalem but for the miracle of the imparting of knowledge that required no schooling. "Through the laying on of the apostles' hands" (*Act 8:18*) such miraculous gifts were imparted. It was God's purpose that the world was to hear about His Son and the way to make that possible in a timely manner was to impart such knowledge without the loss of time it would take in educating those who were of an able mind to learn. Even the uneducated were able to spread the truth of the gospel "and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (*Titus 1:9*). But the gift that was most coveted was to be able to speak in a foreign language that had never been studied. And that became a problem that Paul would address to the church at Corinth.

1Co 14:1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, **especially** that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for **their** upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

"That is, the truths which are communicated to him by the Spirit, and which he utters in an unknown language, may be valuable, and may be the means of strengthening his faith, and building him up in the hopes of the gospel, but they can be of no use to others."
Albert Barnes

- Paul was not saying here that he didn't want any of them speaking in foreign languages. His concern was that many of them were focusing too much on that ability and not on the reason they had it in the first place. Such gifts were for evangelistic purposes and the growth of the church worldwide.

1Co 14:5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues (*Gk.1100- language [specifically one naturally un-acquired]*), but even more to prophesy (*Gk.4395- speak under inspiration*). The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, **so that** the church may be built up. 6 Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

- How could speaking in a foreign language benefit those who didn't understand it?

1Co 14:10 There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

- As **Paul** stated in verse 5, the message is more important than the messenger if the messenger is unable to deliver it audibly where all can understand. As in verse 8, there are different patterns a bugler can express depending on the message he needs to convey.

1Co 14:8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

- Since we **are** in a battle for the souls of mankind, we also need to be able to convey the message in a distinct and understandable way. The message of the gospel is simple, but the way it's presented may be confusing, especially if the messenger doesn't convey it "as what it really is, the word of **God**" (1 Thes 2:13).

1Co 14:18 I thank **God** that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in [the] church (Gk.1577- assembly) I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

- The message of the gospel was more important to **Paul** than just showing off to make himself look like he was somebody. Many who had such a gift were doing just that and **Paul** reminded them where he had the ability to show off more than all of them but only used such gifts as they were meant to be used. Such gifts were for the purpose of bridging the language barriers that existed since the building of the tower of Babel was interrupted. With a common understanding, as if one language, spreading the gospel was no longer impeded by the inability of being communicated because of ignorance of unlearned languages. It was to be as the **Lord** stated in Gen 6.

Gen 11:6 And the **LORD** said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

- We need to come together with one purpose and if that one purpose is seen in **God's** eyes as righteous, nothing will be impossible to us.

Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love **God** **all things work together** for good, for those who are called according to **His** purpose (Gk.4286- intention).

"All our afflictions and trials; all the persecutions and calamities to which we are exposed. Though they are numerous and long-continued yet they are among the means that are appointed for our welfare."

"...they shall mutually contribute to our good. They take off our affections from this world; they teach us the truth about our frail, transitory, and lying condition; they lead us to look to God for support, and to heaven for a final home; and they produce a subdued spirit. a humble temper, a patient, tender, and kind disposition."

"Christians are said to be called because God has invited them to be saved,"

Albert Barnes

2Th 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to **God** for you, brothers beloved by the **Lord**, because **God** chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the **Spirit** and belief in the truth. 14 To this **He** **called you through our gospel**, so that you may obtain the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

- Thus the purpose of the calling, to “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”. But that call is for all in the world to hear and if not through us, then who?

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that **all** should reach repentance.

- What happens to those who never heard of Jesus, like the Chinese or the African living in a remote village who can't read or has yet to see an outsider? Will they be responsible to God on the day of judgment when He condemns the lost to a fiery devil's Hell? Why don't we allow God's word to tell us the answer to this question and not ponder and make the decisions we often do without referring to His understanding. After all, real wisdom is in understanding how God sees the world through His eyes and not our own.

Joh 14:21 **Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."**

- When we think of the phrase “for God so loved the world” (Jn 3:16) with considering the fact that He gave His Son to save everyone, why is this passage different in stating God's love as being focused on such a small group of people? In this passage we are told that God loves those who love His Son. But how can someone love Christ if they never even heard of Him? Is it their fault that they were never introduced to the Bible through the evangelistic efforts of the faithful? Even though we as Christians have a responsibility to evangelize those we come in contact with, it still remains the responsibility of every accountable soul to “seek God, in hope that they might feel their way toward Him. [Since] He is actually not far from each one of us” (Act 17:27). So...

2Co 4:3 ... if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing.

- And “those who are perishing” have the choice in the matter. Let's consider a few more passages.

2Th 1:7 ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those **who do not know God** and on those **who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, **10** when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

- The passage doesn't give an exception to the rule if there are those who never heard of God to the point of obeying the gospel. It only states that **all** those (*excluding children of course and those of such nature- Mat 19:14*) who have no knowledge of God, whether by self-imposed ignorance or not, will be separated from Him throughout eternity in pain and anguish. But is that fair? Be careful in asking such a thing of God.

Rom 9:20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have You made me like this?"

- Paul's letter to the Romans deals with the subject of our own personal responsibility when it comes to whether or not we know God or even **want** to follow Him. He doesn't form us to become sinful and we can't just argue with Him saying His actions aren't fair.

Jas 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- Even Abraham may have been close to arguing with the Lord but seasoned his words in such a humble way where he was able to debate Him. In the midst of his plea he made a statement that we should all reread so we don't become guilty of being stiff-necked.

Gen 18:25 ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

- If God, as the ultimate Judge over all the earth, allowed some sins to go unpunished who would want to obey Him? But remember, He is as fair as He is loving and He cannot allow lawlessness to go unpunished. And not knowing His laws or searching His will, will be no excuse to have broken them when facing Him on that day. Just as stating you didn't see the speed limit sign won't excuse you by the officer who catches you speeding.

Rom 1:20 For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and Divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, **in the things that have been made**. So they are **without excuse**.

- Have we ever wondered "where did I come from, is there life after death, did things just appear on their own, were they always in existence, why does the sun rise in the east and set in the west"? Obviously there are many, many other questions we may have asked at one time or another but the fact remains that we, at one time or another, wondered. The evidence of the creation cannot be overlooked. And everything made has a maker so why wouldn't the earth and everything in it have One too? Those who aren't interested in finding these things out won't search for them and are missing out on the understanding that will make their lives complete. They need only search with all their hearts.

Mat 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

- Lack of communication is no longer to be used as an excuse for not knowing Who God is. He has made Himself known through the creation, His word and through Jesus having come to the world to fulfill the Father's will.

Rom 8:29 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

- The choice belongs to us whether we wish to be a part of the 'foreknown'. If you aren't part of this Heaven bound group, won't you have your sins washed away in baptism this day and let the Lord add you to the church once you've obeyed His will to be saved (Act 2:47)? If you have a need, won't you come?

Charli Yana
December 14, 2014

www.searchfortruth.church