

IV.4. Lambs to Rams: The Tower & Languages

What would be the purpose of going back over the Old Testament but for the lessons those passages teach us about historical events, communications between God and man and the morals we can glean from them.

Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

From a period before the Mosaic Law was given we can read about the post-flood era when Noah's family of three sons and their wives began fulfilling God's command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (*Gen 9:1*).

Gen 10:32 These *are* the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

But something happened along the way that made them cease from expanding into the whole world.

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.

What happened to God's command to "fill the earth"?

"A desire for personal fame prevents one from truly giving God the glory."

Gary Hampton

To construct such a tower city as Babel would have been a great undertaking which would have required the cooperation of all

able bodied individuals in order to complete it. They had the materials to accomplish “every intention of the thoughts of [their hearts]”, but sadly it was “only evil continually” (*Gen 6:5*). Man’s wicked ways had survived the flood. There was nothing wrong with building anything as long as whatever they built was **not** constructed in order to quell their fears or satisfy their own egos. On top of that, they weren’t “[being] fruitful” and “[filling] the earth” as their forefathers were told they were to do.

Gen 11:5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the **children of men** builded. (*Emp. added; Notice how the ‘children of God’ had no interest in such vanity.*)

Why would God have to personally inspect the building of the tower? Actually, He didn’t. So why did He allow them to even begin building it in the first place? He may have given them time in which to think about what they were doing and let them come to the conclusion that their actions were wrong, thus nobody could say they weren’t given the opportunity to change their minds. He knew all about what was going to happen and used their disobedience to fulfill His Providential plan to ultimately save man, just as He did with Pharaoh to save the Israelites. It was to make His name known throughout the earth.

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

And besides, the people were the ones who needed the benefit of His presence in order for them to understand the depth of their rebellion.

“The people were united because of their common ancestors and language. Their unity had produced one great act of rebellion. God saw men would continue to use unity in a bad way. No form of rebellion would be out of the realm of possibility. Therefore, he resolved to confuse

the
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languages.”

Gen 11:6 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. (*Emp. added*)

Just as God said “let Us make man in Our image” (1:26) He again enlists the three Persons of the Godhead. As He would later question Moses after Moses made the excuse that he was “slow of speech and of tongue”, God asked “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (*Ex 4:10-11*)

Gen 11:8 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.

From Noah, through Shem to Abram

Noah was 500 years old when Shem was born (*Gen 5:32*) and lived to be a total of 950 years old (*Gen 9:29*). He lived for 60 years after the birth of Abram. Shem, who lived to be 600 years old, lived 110 years after Abram was born according to the genealogy of Gen 11:10-26. He would have been around for about ten years after Isaac was born and outlived Terah. Generations shortly after those of the survivors of the flood began to shorten since it’s known that Terah, Abram’s father, only lived to be 205 years old (*Gen 11:32*).

“The human population went through a severe genetic bottleneck at the time of the Flood—only eight individuals.”

The Bible, Science, and the Ages of the Patriarchs *by* Bert Thompson, Ph.D.,

Noah and his family would have lived through the divided languages that resulted from the building of the tower of Babel (*pronounced baw-bel'*). Even within the different clans of Japheth, Ham and Shem there were multiple languages (*10:5, 20, 31*).

Speaking in Tongues

The apostle Paul would later be called a “babbler” by “some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers”. They along with some others were confused saying “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.’ (*Act 17:18*) But even before “Paul [was] called by the will of God to be an apostle” (*1 Cor 1:1*) there came a time in history where God would amend this miraculous confusion of languages on another occasion that would stun the then known world.

Jesus had “ordered [His disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father” to “be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from [then]” (*Act 1:4-5*). At that He ascended and when ten days had expired and “the day of Pentecost arrived” (*2:1*) “they (*the apostles as per 1:26*) were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (*Gk.1100- language*) as the Spirit gave them utterance” (*v. 4*).

This was not some sort of gibberish speaking as many of the charismatic denominations teach. These were actual spoken languages that existed throughout the world at that time. For the apostles, who were known to be merely “Galileans” (*2:7*), to be able to speak so many languages, this could only be accomplished by such an outpouring of the Spirit. Such a gift to speak foreign languages not studied gave the apostles of Christ the ability on such an occasion to share the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to such a huge gathering of Jews, “devout men from every nation under heaven” (*2:5*). They were the first to receive the Gospel message (*Rom 1:16*) that “the New Covenant [in Christ’s] blood” (*Lk 22:20*) became the final sacrifice thus fulfilling the Law “by canceling the

record of debt that stood against [them] with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross” (*Col 2:14*). It all happened according to Providence and “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things in earth” (*Eph 1:10*).

Act 2: 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man **heard them speak in his own language**. 7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? (*Emp. added*)

From the beginning man had “one language” in order to communicate and thus multiply as they were commanded. But God confused their communication during the building of the tower in order for them to leave its construction and obey His commandment to “fill the earth”. However, on the day of Pentecost He gave the apostles the ability to speak in several languages in order to bring His creation together for a common good in order to save them. Speaking in several languages, they were able to get the attention of those present for the Feast of Pentecost, those who came for the Passover 50 days earlier, who knew of and/or agreed to the crucifixion of Christ, and who would then have their hearts goaded in order to ask the apostles “Brothers, what shall we do?” (2:37)

Being able to translate the Gospel into the multitudes of languages, “Peter, standing with the eleven” (2:14), told them of the only thing that would save them, which is the only means by which anyone can be saved even today.

Act 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Peter would later write, concerning the flood, that “baptism, which now corresponds with this (*the flood*), now saves you” (1 *Pet 3:21*).

IV.4. Questions

1. Why did the children of man begin to build the tower of Babel? a) because they could; b) for an income; c) for fame.
2. What was the tower constructed of? a) Gopher wood; b) cured bricks and slime; c) concrete and blocks.
3. What was the sin of building the tower? a) they didn’t build it according to God’s plans; b) they didn’t build it from the materials God gave them; c) they disobeyed God by not filling the earth.
4. Why did God allow them to build it as far as they did? a) ultimately to save man; b) He wanted to see how high they would build it; c) they ran out of materials.
5. Who went with God to inspect the tower’s construction? a) the angels; b) the other two Persons of the Godhead; c) Satan.
6. True or false: Noah was alive even after Abram was born. a) true; b) false; c) Bible study cannot reveal it.
7. What does “Babel” mean? a) language; b) speech; c) confusion.
8. As a miraculous gift, what were “tongues”? a) languages of different dialects; b) languages studied; c) languages not studied.