

Let Us  
(Genesis 11)

In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let Us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

And now in Genesis 11, after the flood, Moses records, “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 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. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 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” (vv. 1-4).

Shinar is the ancient name for Babylonia. Now some believe that this was mans’ first attempted to play god after the flood. The people settled there and determined to build a city and a tower. They did so with oven-baked clay bricks and tar mortar. The fact that everyone spoke the same language and had the same culture made the building process possible.

But right at the center of the story, “the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 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” (vv. 5-6).

Therefore, the LORD said, “let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city” (vv. 7-8).

Now I believe that the tower was to serve three purposes for man:

First, the people wanted its top to reach “heaven.” Historians tell us that years later the ziggurats of Babylon and Assyria were build, no doubt, for a similar purpose. “These stepped pyramids hosted shrines to the gods of the heavens at their tops. The top of the tower of Babel would have had a room for their god with the planets, the sun, and the moon as prominent features in the design.

Now this is the reason that scholars believe the first purpose of the tower was to perpetuate a false religion based on worship involving the heavenly bodies. One writer said, “The builders of the tower of Babel, in essence, replaced God with a god they could personally define and manipulate.”

Second, the people at Babel wanted to make a name for themselves. This means that they wanted to establish their fame, and their reputation. They, no doubt, intended to make a shrine not only to the heavens, but also to human strength and ingenuity. They defied, or that is, they challenged Psalm 19:1-4 long before David penned it.

Third, the tower builders wanted to halt the spread of humanity throughout the earth. And this was a direct violation of God's directive (Genesis 9:1). Even after all that took place during the flood God knew that the human race would commit unbridled evil (v. 6).

Imagine the debauchery and rebellion that would have developed had the people of Babel continued to live as one people. When God scattered the people upon the face of all the earth it was an act of mercy – it was all in the plan of God.

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