

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Tower of Ambition

(Jerry Fite)

Moses, records the names of approximately 70 families in Genesis 10. These were the descendants of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. These families comprised nations that “*were divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations*” (Genesis 10:5). How did they become divided and speak in different languages?

There was a time when “*the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech*” (Genesis 11:1). Not only was the matter or “kind” of speech the same, but they had one “way” of pronouncing their words in their language the world over.

But something occurred in man’s history when mankind was migrating from the east. Travelers came to an extended plain in the land of Shinar, which is the area upon which Babylonia was founded, and “*dwelt there.*” (Genesis 11:2). They said to each other, “*Come 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” (Genesis 11:4). It is clear that ambition was a motive behind building the city and tower. They wanted to make a name for themselves; a name synonymous with power, which would be greatly diminished if scattered abroad.

Man’s ambition to make a name for oneself is often coupled with fear of becoming insignificant. Do you think naming a tall building in New York “Trump Tower” has anything to do with ambition and fear in the mind of Donald Trump? Early on man wanted a power base (city) with glory (tower to the heavens) for fear of being scattered resulting in insignificance.

The tower whose top rises “*up to heaven*” is a hyperbolic expression denoting great height. It was made of bricks hardened by fire, not by the sun. Slime, denoting that which boils up from subterranean fountains, was hot bitumen which dried as strong mortar.

Forty miles west of Baghdad, archeologists have discovered the remains of the “Temple of the Seven Planets” which cylinders extracted from the site have revealed. A former Babylonian ruler partially built it, but Nebuchadnezzar completed it. When finished, the fire hardened bricks rose some 295 feet into the air. Could it rising into heaven for a religious idolatrous purpose indicate one motive fostered in the earlier attempt in Genesis 11?

God saw with such Godless ambition coupled with fear that nothing was impossible in man’s quest of satisfying his imagination. So, He suddenly came with power to “*confound*” their language so they could not understand one another. They left off building the city, and scattered according to distinctive groups of the same language.

Different languages began as a result of Godless ambition, coupled with fear of being insignificant. May we always glory in God and trust his way (Jeremiah 9:23-24, I Corinthians 1:29-31).