

9. The pride that reached to heaven

4/24/2005

"Pali, this bull has killed me." So said Jose Cubero, one of Spain's most brilliant matadors, before he lost consciousness and died. Only 21 years old, he had been enjoying a spectacular career. However, in this bullfight, Jose made a tragic mistake. He thrust his sword a final time into a bleeding, delirious bull, which then collapsed.

Considering the struggle finished, Jose turned to the crowd to acknowledge the applause. The bull, however, was not dead. It rose and lunged at the unsuspecting matador, its horn piercing his back and puncturing his heart.

Just when we think we've finished off pride, just when we turn to accept the congratulations of the crowd, pride stabs us in the back. We should never consider pride dead before we are. As long as we have this puny human nature, we have to struggle with the main source of all of our sins. Some of you might say, "I have such a low self-esteem. So you cannot find pride in me." Low self-esteem is a form of pride too. Comparing yourself with others and not satisfied with what you are or who you are.

Again, I strongly believe that the deepest root reason for all of our sins comes from our pride.

This morning we are going to take a look at two individuals and a well-known landmark that connect with pride.

A. THE MIGHTY HUNTER NIMROD

Before we jump down to v9 of chapter 10, you will notice that there are a good list of genealogy of ancient kingdom people. According to a Christian archaeologist and linguist William F. Albright, this tenth chapter of Genesis stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework. The Table of nations remains an astonishing accurate document.

You are welcome to read all those fancy names for your reading pleasure.

Genesis 10:9-12 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

Nimrod was a grandson of Ham through Cush, and his name means "rebel." He was a mighty tyrant in the sight of God, the first dictator. The word "hunter" does not refer to the hunting of animals, but rather to the hunting of men.

He was the founder of the Babylonian empire and the organizer of the enterprise that led to the construction of the Tower of Babel. History informs us that Nimrod and his wife devised a new religion built around "the mother and child." Many of Byzantine artworks show the influence of the Babylon's mother and child culture.

"Babylon" in the Bible symbolizes rebellion against God and confusion in religion. We see Babylon empires opposing the people of God throughout the Bible.

B. THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11:1-4 Now the whole earth had one language and 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 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, "(1) Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower (2) whose top is in the heavens; (3) let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

They settled in a plain in the land of Shinar which is in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

Using baked bricks and asphalt for mortar, men built a tower that was both strong and waterproof, even as Noah used the same material in waterproofing the ark. Many archaeologists has discovered that this type of baked brick and asphalt construction was common in ancient Babylon.

I asked you to put numbers in v4. The number 1 through 3 show a strong statement of themselves against God. When they said that, they meant it.

The purpose of this city and the tower were to:

- 1) maintain unity in opposition to God**
- 2) to achieve the status of God**
- 3) make a name for themselves.**

This entire operation is a preview of the final opposition of man and satan against Christ, centered in the 'Great Babylon' of Rev. 17-18. Men will unite then in a worldwide church and world political organization. They will be led by the Antichrist, the last world dictator, but their plans will be stopped by God. It is interesting to note that today the world is rapidly moving toward the "one world" government concept. Thanks to the United Nations and other international alliances.

The great hunter Nimrod was the center of this Babylonian movement. In order to make his dreams come true, two features and factors were essential:

- 1) Nimrod needed a center of unity, a sort of headquarters.**

He needed a capital, a place to assemble, a place to look to. This was why he built the city of Babel.

- 2) He needed a rallying point, not just geographical but psychological, that which gives motive.**

There had to be some impelling and compelling motivation. There had to be a monument. So they started to build the Tower of Babel.

The Tower of Babel was not built as a place of refuge in time of next great flood. This tower revealed the arrogant, defiant, rebellious attitude of man against God. The Tower of Babel was a religious symbol. It was a place where people worshiped the creature rather than the Creator.

It is doubtful they thought they could build a tower that actually reached to heaven. Most astrological and occult practices have a history back to Babel. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus said the Tower of Babel still stood in his day and he had witnessed it.

There are three things worldly people desires: the lust of flesh, the lust of life and the lust of eyes. None of these belongs to the life of born-again Christians.

These are nothing more than manifestation of pride of the mankind. Then, pride always incubate rebellion against God.

Pride is the only disease known to man that makes everyone sick except the person who has it. Blind ambition is a giant step away from God and one step closer to catastrophe.

C. S. Lewis said, "It is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began."

The mankind is in the process of building a modern day Tower of Babel again. In my opinion, I believe that it is the cloning process of human by using the advanced DNA technology. Creating human is God's job, not man's. When we try to get into the area where it belongs to God, He is going to deal with our pride and intellectual arrogance.

C. YOU THINK YOU CAN, HUH?

Genesis 11:5-9 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Here is another subtle reference to the Trinity.

Since all the people spoke one language, they didn't have any language barrier. They could get together and pool their knowledge and resources.

The capability of the mankind is mind boggling. From sending people to Moon, to get see the inside of a person's brain to detect any disease, to come up with computer technology beyond the majority people's wildest imagination.

For an example, about twelve years ago, I had a computer with a 256 mb hard drive space. I thought it was very good. But now, we can have the same hard drive size in this small SD card which is a half of a stick of chewing gum. This one is faster and works better.

We find here that man has a fallen nature in spite of the Flood and that he is totally depraved. God cannot ignore this prideful attitude. Because they were in rebellion against Him. He simply put up a language barrier among them.

Can you just imagine one moment they were communicating well together and next moment, they could not understand each other at all? The language barrier is a wall that is higher than the Great Wall of China. They suddenly couldn't understand each other. The building project came to a screeching halt, and the people moved away from Babel – they went in every direction.

The division of the languages is a fascinating subject. Language is so complex because languages exist as whole systems, not as small parts put together. Most modern linguists believe all languages come from one original language.

The forced separation of men from Babel was more God's mercy than His judgment.

Ladies and gentlemen, the mankind is starting to overcome this language barrier once again through the internet. Thanks to Al Gore, former Vice President who claimed to be the father of the internet. I am not saying that the internet is a tool of satan. Our church has a web site that contains a lot of useful information for your spiritual growth. It happened to be a part of the process toward the end time. It is a matter of how we use it for God's glory.

D. A KING WHO THOUGHT HE WAS IT

Daniel 4:28-33 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

Here is a king from the same area, one of the Babylonian kingdoms, who thought everything he had was something he achieved by himself and walked around the top of his palace like an arrogant peacock. While his boastful words were still in his mouth, the Lord struck him to be an insane man and he started to act like an animal. He went from riches to rag in a moment.

The story didn't end with a tragedy, but a happy ending.

Daniel 4:34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation.
Daniel 4:36-37 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

When Nebuchadnezzar turned to God and humbled himself and lifted his eyes to the Lord in praise and adoration, his mind turned from insanity to normal. Everything he had was restored.

Nothing is more distasteful to God than self-conceit. This first and fundamental sin in essence aims at enthroning self at the expense of God. Pride is a sin of whose presence its victim is least conscious. If we are honest, when we measure ourselves

by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ who humbled Himself even to death on a cross, we cannot but be overwhelmed with gratitude, respect and love for our God.

God stands ready to help us as we admit that we cannot help ourselves. Before we get all enamored with our own high and mighty importance, it is a good idea to take a backward glance at the pit from which Jesus Christ lifted us. And let's not just think about it: let's admit it. It has a way of keeping us all on the same level – undeserving recipients of His amazing grace.

1 Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

E. APPLICATIONS

1) God hates a prideful attitude, but He loves those who are humble in His sight.

Proverbs 12:15 tells us that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise."

1 Peter 5:5 God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.

2) It is better to be humble in the sight of God than to be humbled by Him.

Because if God chooses to humble us, it can be quite a disaster before it gets better.

3) The chastisement of God always has a holy and helpful purpose.

When God punishes us, He doesn't punish us because He enjoys it. He does it to make us to be more like Jesus.