

BABYLONIAN DEBACLE
The Old Testament Today
Banska Bystrica, 24th May 2020

Gn 11:1-9 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 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, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen 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." 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. 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, 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.

<p>⁸ וְכוּשׁ יָלַד אֶת-נִמְרוֹד הוּא הָחָל לְהִיוֹת גִּבּוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ ⁹ הוּא-הָיָה גִבּוֹר-צִיד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל-כֵּן יֹאמַר בְּנִמְרוֹד גִּבּוֹר צִיד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה ¹⁰ וְהָיָה רֵאשִׁית מַמְלַכְתּוֹ בָּבֶל וְאֶרֶץ וְאֶפְרַת וְכַלְנֵה בְּאֶרֶץ שִׁנְעָר</p>	<p>Gn 10:8-10 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. ⁹ He was a <u>mighty hunter before</u> the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.</p>
<p>וְלֵעֶבֶר יָלַד שְׁנֵי בָנִים שֵׁם הָאֶחָד פֶּלֶג כִּי בְיָמָיו נִפְלְגָה הָאֲרֶץ</p>	<p>Gn 10:25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided</p>
<p>Rev 17:5 Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.</p>	<p>Rev 17:5 "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."</p>
<p>Eph 4:17-19 Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν, ¹⁸ ἐσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν, ¹⁹ οἵτινες ἀπηληγότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ</p>	<p>Eph 4:17-19 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are (4) darkened in their understanding, (3) alienated from the life of God because of the (2) ignorance that is in them, due to their (1) hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become (5) callous and have given themselves up to (6) sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.</p>

OUTLINE

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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. ANSWERED AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- time scale; causal relations; economic, political, demographic, cultural...
- ancestry and its influence on posterity; spiritual fundamentals → attitudes toward God; and *God's attitude toward humanity*...
- Ancestral customs are like *seeds* of which later culture is an *outgrowth*...
- Our *position* toward Shem and the Semites... (gentiles) What can we expect from God?...

0.2. "BABYLON" – A HISTORY AND A SYMBOL

- (1) Babel of Gn 10-11; (2) Babylon of Hammurapi; (3) Neo-Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar; (4) Babylon of Revelation
- [HISLOP *The Two Babylons*] "Ninus, king of the Assyrians" says Troguus Pompeius,... He was the first who carried on war against his neighbours, and he conquered all nations from Assyria to Lybia, as they were yet unacquainted with the arts of war... Diodorus makes Ninus "the most ancient of the Assyrian kings"¹
- "Today, "Babylonia" is used to describe the south of modern Iraq, stretching from the Baghdad area down to the Gulf. It is a Greek term (βαβυλωνία χωρά) that would have been alien to its inhabitants in the early first millennium BC who would have described the region as the "land of Sumer and Akkad..."²
- [UNGER] The Assyro-Babylonian word zigguratu denotes a sacred temple tower and means a "pinnacle" or "mountaintop." The Babylonian ziggurat was a gigantic artificial mound of sun-dried bricks. The oldest extant ziggurat is that at ancient Uruk, biblical Erech (Gen. 10:10), modern Warka. Nothing in the biblical narrative indicates that the so-called Tower of Babel was a temple tower or ziggurat. It is simply called a tower (migdāl). It seems clear that the Tower of Babel was the first structure of this sort ever attempted, and if later towers have any connection with the Tower of Babel, they are to be thought of as descendants of it.
- Isaiah 13 → A prophecy against Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw...
- **Isaiah 46:1** Bel bows down; Nebo stoops; their idols are on beasts and livestock → [HISLOP, p. 34] "We have seen reason already to conclude that, under the name Bel, as distinguished from Baal, Gush was the great soothsayer or false prophet worshipped at Babylon." (Cush, the father of Nimrod)
- **Isaiah 47:13** You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you

¹ The name "Assyrians" ...has a wide latitude of meaning among the classic authors, taking in the Babylonians as well as the Assyrians proper.

² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/countries/babylonia/> (23.5.2020)

- Jeremiah 50 → This is what the Lord said concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians through the prophet Jeremiah: ... "Babylon is captured; Bel is shamed; Marduk is panic-stricken. Her images are shamed; her idols are panic-stricken."

0.3. THE TOWER

- The precise meaning of the structure is unknown, though it is widely agreed that it formed a stairway between the gods and earth (cf. Gen 28:12).

0.4. WORLD LANGUAGES

- historical linguistics and Babel

0.5. THE THREE CYCLES OF REBELLION

- (1) Eden, the fall, eviction, clothing (2) violence, sex, flood, the arch, (3) pride, occult, confusion of languages

1. CIVILISATION CYCLES

- → Spengler; Toynbee...

1.1. THE PLACE TO DWELL

- → control (no-one is out of reach)
- → totality (moving prohibited[?])
- economic basis → considered the most decisive conditions of culture (eg. Marxism...)
- **Mt 4:4** "It is written, " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

1.2. TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

- **Isa 9:8-10** The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; ⁹ and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: ¹⁰ "The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."
- **Isaiah 31:3** The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.
- **Ps 20:7(8)** Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

1.3. PURSUING FAME AND GLORY

- God would "make a name" for Abram (12:2-3)
- **John 5:44** How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

1.4. IDOLATRY

- occult (spiritual fornication)
- astrology; fortunetelling; spiritism; witchcraft...

1.5. OTHER "BABYLONIAN TOWERS"

1.5.1. THE UBIQUITOUS PARADIGM

- individuals → Nebuchadrezzar: **Daniel 4:30-31** "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,

1.5.2. POLITICAL TOTALITARIANISM

- **Eze 28:2** "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god-..."

1.5.3. RELIGIONS/PHILOSOPHIES

- systems to replace God through (1) ritual/witchcraft, (2) knowledge/gnosticism, (3) organization/control Aristotle; Hegel; Marx... → postmodernism

1.5.4. SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

- Theory of Everything; Big Bang theory; evolutionism...

1.5.5. ARTS

- Horace: Exegi monumentum aere perennius...
- Pushkin: Я памятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный (I've built myself a monument, a one not man-made) ... Вознёсся выше он главою непокорной / Александрийского столпа. (It soared up higher with its head rebellious / Than Alexandrian Stele)
- Dante: Divine Comedy; Balzac: Human Comedy;
- Romanticism → Beethoven; Wagner; Mahler; Scriabin...
- Hollywood → dreams of heavenly happiness "the Wonder World of Make Believe" zázračný svet imaginácie

2. WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM US

- **Mic 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

2.1. REPRESENTATION

- "imago dei" → where? (the quotation ascribed to Luther: "Where the battle rages the loyalty of the soldier is proved...") → **Gn 12:1** the LORD said to Abram, "**Go** from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. **Mt 28:19** **Go** therefore and make disciples..."

2.2. USE, BUT DO NOT ABUSE THE WORLD

- **NIV 1Cor 7:31** ...use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. (οἱ χρώμενοι τὸν κόσμον ὡς μὴ καταχρώμενοι) → **1Cor 1:31** "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." **2Cor 10:17** "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord"

2.3. GLORIFY GOD

- **Mt 5:16** ...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven → **1Cor 4:7** ...What do you have that you did not receive?...

2.4. WORSHIP THE ONLY GOD

- **1 John 5:21** Little children, keep yourselves from idols.
- **1Thes 1:9-10** ...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

3. TO REMEMBER

- The good gifts of God easily become evil entanglements of the devil.
- The "Babylonian paradigm" is contagious and believers are not immune from it.
- **Isa 48:20** Go out from Babylon... **Isa 52:11** Depart, depart, go out from there; → **2Cor 6:17** go out from their midst, and be separate from them