

## Article of the Month – March 2010

### Twelve Missionary Themes in Genesis (10)

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In the series of 12 missionary themes in Genesis we now look at

#### ***Theme 10: The Principle of Babel – From Community to System***

In Gen. 10 we read for the first time about Babel. Ham's sons are mentioned, Cush being one of them. When Cush's sons are mentioned, we miss Nimrod but Cush is called Nimrod's father.<sup>1</sup> 'Father' can also mean: 'ancestor', or 'founder'.<sup>2</sup> This may be more logical.<sup>3</sup> Babylon (or Shinar) was one of the first centers of the kingdom Nimrod founded. Nineveh traces its roots back to Nimrod as well: he built this later capital of Assyria. Throughout biblical

history both powers bothered God's people repeatedly.<sup>4</sup>

Another descendant from Ham was Mizraim (Egypt) to whom the Philistines trace their ancestry. Both peoples lived in almost unbroken hostility towards Israel.<sup>5</sup>

When we look at the peoples that descended from Canaan, we see the complete group that had to be driven out of the land that God had promised Abraham.<sup>6</sup> The curse pronounced on Canaan came through in these seven people groups, over one thousand years later and also in subsequent years when Israel started to extinguish them because of their great wickedness.<sup>7</sup>

People wonder how a merciful God could allow one group of people to drive seven others out of their land, to be conquered and sometimes killed.<sup>8</sup> But how much *more* merciful should God have been, to tolerate peoples living in gross idolatry, immorality and violence for over one thousand years, without punishment? The wages of sin is death<sup>9</sup> – a law, that was not just applied to the Canaanite peoples but later to Israel as well, when *they* slipped into idolatry. The same axiom applies today. God expects us to serve Him His way and to have no other gods besides Him. Disobeying His righteous demands means death!

Now, after this little excursion, we return to Nimrod. The Bible calls him 'a mighty hunter before the Lord' – to be understood as 'before the face of the Lord' and not as 'with the Lord's approval'. On the contrary: Nimrod was a hunter after human souls, he hunted for worship. He came from a line of people who had chosen their own way instead of God's and

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 10:6-8

<sup>2</sup> See footnote on Gen. 10:8 in the NIV

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Gen. 10:7,10,11

<sup>4</sup> Specifically in the Assyrian period (1274-609 BC) and in the Babylonian period (626-539 BC)

<sup>5</sup> Especially during Israel's slavery in Egypt (1850-1450 BC) and during Philistine supremacy (1220-1010 BC)

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 10:15; Ex. 3:17; Deut. 7:1

<sup>7</sup> Deut. 9:4b. The curse was pronounced in 2456 BC and effectuated from 1407 BC onwards

<sup>8</sup> Yet, this did not happen always, see e.g. Judges 1

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 6:23a

who reinforced their straying in their descendants. This ‘mighty hunter’ reminds us of the description Jesus gave of the devil, who only steals, kills and destroys.<sup>10</sup>

Fawcett comments: ‘Nimrod, also known as Tammuz ... and his wife Semiramus founded the old cultic Babylonian religion. As the Babylonian empire conquered the world, Nimrod’s pagan religion spread and was widely accepted. Elements of it can still be seen in most of the non-Christian religions today. After Nimrod’s death he was deified as Tammuz the shepherd god, the god of fertility. His worship involved the vilest sexual orgies in which every woman had to participate at least once in her life. His wife Semiramus was also worshiped as a goddess.’ He then goes on to explain a number of practices and symbols of that religion and states that ‘Egypt was wholly given over to pagan worship, based on the religion of Babylon, in the days of Israel’s bondage there. Their bondage was both physical and spiritual because they adopted the ways and religion of that pagan empire.’<sup>11</sup> For further reference, see my article of April 2009.

In Gen. 11, not too long after Nimrod’s time, all people still had the same language, culture, worldview and value system that helped them in their quest for super-unity. Such a super-unity for evil would certainly have invoked another pre-Messianic judgment. The fact that God scattered them before degeneration could go too far, was an act of grace rather than of punishment. Super-unity for good can only be achieved for and by those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>12</sup> The language barriers of Gen. 11 (where the divine-human dialogue was jeopardized) were partially lifted in Acts 2 where that dialogue is restored.

It is significant that the word ‘Babel’ in Hebrew means ‘confusion’ (balal), whereas in Babylonian it meant ‘gate to God’ (bab-ili). This truth applies today as well: what the Gentiles in their religions see as a gateway to heaven is in fact a labyrinth of confusion.

After thwarting Godless human partnerships, God starts to organize a God-fearing humanity by calling Abram with huge promises.<sup>13</sup> Abram came from Chaldea (another name for Babylon). By leaving his home city, he became a traveler from the nations on his way to the Promised Land. Later, his people came out of Egypt on their way to the same Land. Centuries later the people went into exile to Babylon because of their sins. When they came out after 70 years, in a way they prophesied over the End-time Church, who is also encouraged to come out of Babylon,<sup>14</sup> which by that time will have developed into a worldwide anti-Christian religious empire.

It has become more than evident in biblical history that Nimrod’s pagan principles led the community astray and became the model for an idolatrous, Godless anti-Christian system. This system has hindered the people of God throughout the centuries and will continue to do so until it will be destroyed when this present era ends.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John 10:10

<sup>11</sup> Dr. J.R. Fawcett, “Feasts of the Lord”, Hebron Ministries, South Africa, 1993:7-10

<sup>12</sup> John 17:21-23

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 12:2-3

<sup>14</sup> Rev. 18:4

<sup>15</sup> Rev. 17 & 18

