

The Real Reason for the Tower of Babel Story?

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December 21, 2022

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ABSTRACT: The Tower of Babel was a large temple planned for and possibly constructed on the plains of Shinar somewhere in ancient Mesopotamia by the peoples descended from the sons of Noah. Virtually everyone at the time spoke variations of the same language, possibly proto-Indo-European.

A large tower/temple was being planned and constructed by the rulers. In response to this Genesis 11 indicates that God confused the language of the people into ancient versions of the languages we speak today. The reason given for this action by God was that society had become

centralized and “nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.” This seems to be a rather strange and cryptic reason for the action that God took. Perhaps the phrase “nothing would be impossible for them” should be understood in terms of the potential for a one-world government. Power was effectively centralized under one king (possibly Nimrod) after a series of military conquests. Human government is necessary but also has the potential for incredible evil, and a one-world government is one of the worst things that could ever happen. This may well be the real reason why God took the action that He did, and the significance it has for society.

A. Background on Noah, Shinar, and Babel

Archaeologists typically question the Bible and dismiss it as myth because they generally believe that “absence of archaeological evidence = evidence of historical absence.” So they attempt to arrogate to themselves authority over ancient history. But archaeologists should be more cautious because many ancient locations have never been found, such as capital of the famous empire of Akkad. In contrast, the Bible has been shown to be incredibly accurate down to the smallest details when details are mentioned. This is not to say that our translations of the Bible through the centuries were 100% accurate, or that our understanding of a given text means exactly what we think it does. But it does mean that we should consider Biblical takes on historic events much more carefully rather than dismissing the Bible as myth, as is the case with a number of archaeologists.

The Bible tells us that after the flood of Genesis 6, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat in southern Turkey. Noah and his family then moved south and started farming.¹ Children were born, society began to grow, and people began to spread out. The migration patterns are not clearly known, but some groups may have left the region early on and founded remote societies with their own culture and versions of language. Nevertheless, many people apparently stayed in the region of southern Turkey, Syria, and Mesopotamia. There is general agreement among philologists that the Near East was the cradle of language.²

Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:1-4.

The phrase “the whole earth used the same language” is a generalization of the situation at that time and does not necessarily mean that every person then alive on the entire planet spoke exactly the same language.

¹ See the articles “Were the Nephilim Genetically Psychopathic?” and “Was Ham’s Wife of the Nephilim?” https://www.academia.edu/41967404/Were_the_Nephilim_Genetically_Psychopathic and https://www.academia.edu/42206272/Was_Hams_Wife_of_the_Nephilim

² See, for example, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-Europeans>

Genesis 11.9 has a wordplay between the name Babel (bābel) and the verb (bālal) which means “confused” – hence our word for confused speech – “babbling.” Like the flood of Noah, there are many versions of the Tower of Babel (TB) story from cultures around the world, including Mesopotamian, Hittite, Egyptian, Phoenician/Ugaritic/Canaanite, Arab, Armenian, Irish Celtic, Russian, Greek, Roman, Iranian, Indian, Hunnish, Nepalese/Assam/Myanmar, Tibetan/Mongol/Chinese, Siberian, Japanese, Polynesian, Cherokee, Mexican, Peruvian/Andean, Rwandan, Tanzanian, and others.³

Sumer and Akkad were the first civilizations of the ancient world. Sumer, the older region (Shinar may be another name for Sumer) was in the south and eventually became known as Babylonia, whereas Akkad was in the north and eventually became known as Assyria. The major cities of Sumer included Eridu (the first), Uruk (Erech), Ur, Babylon, and Aggad (Akkad). There were a number of takeovers by their neighbors, such as Ur from the region known as “Sealand” which later conquered and consolidated the above cities, until their realm was in turn conquered by peoples from northern Mesopotamia.⁴

It should be noted that the TB site was not necessarily known as “Babel” prior to this incident taking place. Using the term “Babel” for the location may therefore have been an epithet or a description of what happened that came into use afterward, rather than the original name; only later was that term or derivative terms applied to cities in Mesopotamia, such as Babylon. Thus there are at least seven or possibly eight locations in Mesopotamia named “Babel”⁵ so a definitive identification of the TB site has proven to be a difficult task that is still not settled.⁶ There are a number of possibilities:

1. The Great Ziggurat of Ur, in southern Iraq. It is a smaller temple with another problem being that the city of Ur developed and came to prominence long after Eridu and Uruk, and after the associated migration (see below)⁷
2. Etemenaki – temple of the foundation of heaven and earth which was a ziggurat dedicated to the god Marduk in Babylon. It was rebuilt in the 6th century BC by the neo-Babylonian empire but had fallen in disrepair by the time of Alexander the Great.⁸ However there are also problems with this site. The 1st dynasty of Babylon is later than the dynasties of the Sumerian king list, and there is no king named Nimrod in the 1st Babylonian dynasty, unless an old rendering of Hammurabi could be a reference to Nimrod.⁹ A more serious problem with this location is that Babylon developed and came to prominence much later than Eridu and Uruk.

³ https://www.academia.edu/71554402/Babel_Location

⁴ See, for example,

https://www.academia.edu/5613976/The_Book_of_Job_Chronological_Historical_and_Archaeological_Evidence

⁵ <https://www.academia.edu/video/1MaxQ1>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ https://www.academia.edu/25824124/The_Still_Standing_Tower_of_Babel?email_work_card=title

⁸ https://www.academia.edu/86324476/Who_Built_the_Tower_of_Babel_When_and_Why_History_Begins_at_Sumer

⁹ Ibid.

3. Borsippa (Birs Nimrud) It is nearby the city of Babylon which associates it with a Babel-like name, and the name means "Tongue Tower" recalling the biblical story. Also the name Birs-Nimrud links it with Nimrod, and Nebuchadnezzar's inscription statement about this site has matches with the Biblical account, the vitrification traces could be from the destruction described in the Bible, and the ruins found here are quite large (about 150 feet above the surrounding plains with a base circumference of 2300 feet). But there is no evidence that Borsippa or its ziggurat was called Babel, or that it dates to the time of Nimrod.
4. The White Temple in Uruk was said to "get closer to the heavens" and "it connected heaven and earth." Uruk/Erech has also been linked with the city that Enoch or Irad built by Cain before the Flood. Enmerkar, a king and builder of Uruk whose name means "lord storm (hunter)," could match the biblical Nimrod, but there are doubts that Uruk matches Babel.¹⁰
5. Perhaps the best possibility is Eridu in southern Mesopotamia. Eridu is probably the oldest Sumerian city. The ancient historian Berosus seems to match Eridu of the Sumerian King List with Babylon in his own king list. One myth locates the Tower of Babel nearby a body of water which could be the Persian Gulf which was said to extend to Eridu in Sumerian times. Like Erech, Eridu has also been linked with the city of Enoch or Irad built by Cain. The Babylonian god Ea building Eridu is similar to Nimrod building Babel after the Flood.¹¹

In Eridu there are ruins of a large temple which was expanded in a number of phases. But even more interesting is a large platform which may well have been the foundation of the TB – construction that was started but never completed at the time, and on which another structure was built hundreds of years later. Eridu was later referred to as Babel and was abandoned after the late Uruk period.¹²

Adding to the confusion (to the babble?), there has been a scholarly reassessment of the location of Shinar, and some feel that it was located in the north, nearer to mountains of Ararat. The ancient sites of Göbekli Tepe, Urfa, and Harran all lie to the immediate south of Ararat and could possibly have been the location where Noah and his sons originally settled rather than traveling many miles to the south. The kingdom of Akkad may therefore have been located primarily in Syria, possibly at or near the contemporary site of Tell Brak, which may be the location of the capital and is yet to be excavated.¹³ Another possibility was that the lost city of Akkad was synonymous with Charchemish, Ugarit or possibly Babylon.¹⁴

B. The Dispersion following the Tower of Babel incident.

The Bible indicates that a large migration took place at this time:

¹⁰ https://www.academia.edu/71554402/Babel_Location

¹¹ [Ibid.](#)

¹² <https://www.academia.edu/video/1MaxQ1>

¹³ <https://answersresearchjournal.org/where-is-the-tower-of-babel/>

¹⁴ https://www.academia.edu/86112521/The_Tower_of_Babel

So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. Genesis 11:8-9.

This migration seems to match the “Uruk expansion” which took place around 3,000 BC in which people left Mesopotamia in all directions. The city of Uruk was populated at the same time that Eridu was being abandoned.¹⁵ It is also here that the first evidence of writing has been found (early cuneiform text), as writing would then be more necessary due to the new reality of multiple languages. Many of the pottery and building techniques of ancient Sumer were copied and then modified by societies that spread out, such as the Ziggurat form of temple construction which was copied and adapted by many cultures around the world, including Egypt, Central America (Mayan and Inca), Thailand, and elsewhere.¹⁶ The Uruk expansion also led to segregated living groups which was a natural consequence of peoples with different languages who couldn’t easily communicate with each other, and which we still see today as a preference for ethnic enclaves in urban areas.¹⁷

This is not to say that every person in the world lived in Mesopotamia prior to the dispersion, as there is evidence of older settlements and unrelated languages elsewhere, but the largest number apparently remained closer to their place of origin.

C. Background on Nimrod

Noah’s son Ham was the father of Cush, who in turn was the father or ancestor of Nimrod.

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod, and he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore, it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. Genesis 10:8-12

Like the TB, historians have never been able to place the Biblical Nimrod into the history of Mesopotamia, but many believe that the name “Nimrod” (meaning “rebellious one”) was a description of his character or an epithet rather than his name. He was referred to in Genesis 10:9 as “a mighty hunter” but probably a better translation would be “a mighty slaughterer or tyrant.”¹⁸ His cruelty or that of the early rulers of Sumer may well have set the general Mesopotamian tone for the behavior of leaders and armies. For example, the Assyrians engaged in mass executions and depicted the torture of their enemies in great detail on the walls of their palaces. They cut off limbs, gouged out eyes, flayed people, and impaled them on large stakes,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸https://www.academia.edu/2184113/2013_Identifying_Nimrod_of_Genesis_10_with_Sargon_of_Akkad_by_Exegetical_and_Archaeological_Means

leaving them to die a slow death. Such sights were a showcase of their power, instilling fear and terror into the rest of the population, and resulted in a cultural milieu of coarseness, cruelty, and violence.¹⁹

Some believe that Nimrod was Sargon king of Akkad who was a great (and vicious) king, and the ruler who conquered cities in Sumer and farther north in what became to be called Akkad.²⁰ Sargon lived long after the time of Noah (his life is dated to c. 2320–2265 BC), so if Nimrod was Sargon, then he could not have been associated with the TB. It would also mean that Nimrod would had to have been Cush's descendent rather his literal son. After Cush's sons are specifically named, the next verse (Genesis 10:8) states, "Now Cush became the father of Nimrod", allowing for the possibility that Nimrod was a later descendent. An intriguing connection is that Sargon's original power base was the city of Kish which is very similar to "Cush."

Genesis 10:10-12 further states: "The beginning of his [Nimrod's] kingdom was Babel [Eridu], Erech [Uruk], Accad [Akkad] and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city." Sargon's kingdom was based in Shinar, but he expanded it and created the world's first empire from the cities that were ascribed to Nimrod in the above text.

Others believe that Nimrod lived earlier at the time of the TB and was the ruler who inspired its construction. He therefore would have been the literal son of Cush, and the cities mentioned above would then have been conquered and/or established by his successors. Nimrod's real name may have been, or later became, Gilgamesh.²¹ Gilgamesh is mentioned as an early king of Sumer in the Sumerian king list.²² The Epic of Gilgamesh describes him as very large, aggressive, sexually obsessed, and semi-divine (possibly having a Nephilim bloodline?).²³ Second Temple writings, the Talmud, and Arab sources including the Quran have a lot to say about Nimrod and allege that he was the builder of the TB. Several examples:

And when Nimrod had joyfully returned from battle, after having conquered his enemies... they placed the regal crown upon his head. And he set over his subjects and people, princes, judges, and rulers, as is the custom amongst kings. Book of Jasher 7:34

And all the princes of Nimrod and his great men took counsel together...and they went to seek an extensive piece of ground to build the city and the tower, and they sought in the whole earth and they found none like one valley at the east of the land of Shinar about two days' walk, and they journeyed there, and they dwelt there. And they began to make bricks and burn fires to build the city and the tower that they had imagined to build.

¹⁹ See, for example, <https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/assyrians-torture-60fab7a9642>

²⁰ https://www.academia.edu/2184113/2013_Identifying_Nimrod_of_Genesis_10_with_Sargon_of_Akkad_by_Exegetical_and_Archaeological_Means

²¹ See, for example: <https://mediamonarchy.com/gilgamesh-is-nimrod/>, and <http://www.davelivingston.com/nimrod.htm>

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_King_List

²³ https://www.academia.edu/42206272/Was_Hams_Wife_of_the_Nephilim

Book of Jasher 9:21-24

And in the seventieth year of Reu the building of the Great Tower in the land of Shinar began, and Nimrod, the son of Kush, fed the builders on the beasts which he hunted. And forty years after the Tower was finished God sent a wind and the Tower was overturned, and Nimrod died in it. It was he who after the flood reigned in Babel. Bar Hebraeus

Regardless of whether Nimrod was Sargon or Gilgamesh, and whether the Tower of Babel was constructed under his aegis, Nimrod is prototypical of many rulers and dictators of later history, who sought to deify themselves in various ways in order to justify their authority in the minds of the people.

D. The real reason for God's action in response to the Tower of Babel?

The consequence for the people was not a judgment as in the case of the flood. No one was hurt except Nimrod and/or the leaders who planned the TB as a monument to their greatness.

There are individuals in all societies who crave power over others, and if they are clever and ruthless enough, they will tend to rise to the top. The average person who goes to work, pays taxes, and raises kids, has little conception of the passion that those at the top of society have for power.

The craving for power cuts across all ethnic and racial lines. The same desire for control that motivated Nimrod also motivates black dictators like Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Germans like Hitler, Chinese like Mao, Cambodians like Pol Pot, Arabs like Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hispanics like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and so on. Are there leaders in Europe and the US who are equally power hungry? Of course, but due to democratic political systems, individuals in those nations need to conceal their desires, and become cleverer and more deceptive in trying to reach their power goals.

If we understand that those in power are some of the most intelligent and driven among us, that they often will stop at nothing, and that the chief goal of those who have achieved power is to stay in power, then we can start to open our minds to hidden history, because these individuals are often prepared to use every means at their disposal available in the society in which they live, to defeat their enemies (who are often equally intelligent and rapacious) and stay in power.²⁴

Most of the individuals throughout history who managed to gain significant power were ultimately cast aside, often during their own lifetimes. Nimrod reputedly died in the ruins of the TB, Alexander the Great died of drink at the age of thirty-three after conquering much of the known world; Julius Caesar was assassinated; Hitler overreached himself through greed and stupidity and ultimately committed suicide in his Berlin bomb shelter; Mussolini and Ceausescu were strung up and shot full of holes; Stalin died in his bed after a life of imposing his cruel and Orwellian vision of communist socialism on Russia, but was discredited a few years later after his deeds were publicized; and so on. Nations and empires have lasted longer, but all of them since the time of ancient Sumer have failed to achieve world-wide power. The last

²⁴ See, for example, "The True Conspiracy", https://www.academia.edu/42309829/The_True_Conspiracy

comprehensive attempt at complete world conquest was carried out by the forces of Islam in the seventh through the eleventh centuries, and they also came up short of their objective despite their continued goal of jihad and world conquest.

Nevertheless, the desire of power continues and is a corrupting influence as indicated by Lord Acton: “All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” For example, studies of famines indicate that the main reason for famine is war and violence, which is typically caused by power struggles (starving your opponents can be an effective power tool). Rarely, if ever, has there been a famine in a democratic country that has a free press.²⁵

Perhaps the most chilling statement about the consequences of a government having absolute power, and the deceptions they employ to conceal it, are from George Orwell in his book *1984*:

“Where does the past exist?” asked O’Brien

“In records – it is written down... And in the mind – in human memories” replied Winston.

“We, the Party, control all records and we control all memories... Whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party.” [American postmodern philosophy as potentially adapted by a dictatorship (RBS comment)]

O’Brien continued, “The Party seek power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness; only power, pure power... The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just around the corner there would lay a paradise where humans would be free and equal... We know that no one ever seizes power with the intent of relinquishing it... One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. Power is not a means; it is an end... You must realize that power is power over human beings. Over the body, but above all, over the mind.”²⁶

Many and probably most people in positions power have good intentions and positive motives, or at least they start out that way. But as government becomes more powerful (i.e., less democratic, more socialistic, and less accountable) those who crave power then have more opportunity and a larger scope to shove others aside and impose their will.

²⁵ See, for example, <https://www.cloudave.com/1668/democracies-don-t-suffer-famines-implications-for-corporate-governance/> First, in democracies governments are accountable to their populations, and their leaders have electoral incentives to prevent mass starvation. The need to be reelected impels politicians to ensure that their people do not starve. Second, the existence of a free press and the free flow of information in democracies prevents famine by serving as an early warning system on the effects of natural catastrophes such as floods and droughts that may cause food scarcities [as well as holding politicians accountable].

²⁶ George Orwell, *1984*, pp. 205, 217-218

It seems as if Nimrod or the early rulers of Sumer were on their way to achieving a one-world government, and that God, in His mercy, prevented that from happening, as well as providing incentives for people to spread out across the entire world. In our day we see continual efforts to enlarge government such as the European Union. It is therefore incumbent on us to help prevent government from growing into a monster. Only God can be trusted with absolute power.