

# Faith Pulpit

## Babel, Part 2

Concluding the topic introduced in September's issue, Dr. Whitcomb discusses God's purpose for the division at Babel and His plan for its reversal.

Peleg, which means "division," was the name which this particular descendant of Noah and Shem acquired by virtue of his presence at the scene of God's judgment of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:25). Surely, loving parents would not have named their son "Peleg" at the time of his birth, anymore than Nabal (= "fool"), the husband of Abigail, would have received such a name at his birth (cf. 1 Sam. 25:25)!

But the question remains: Why was mankind divided? I believe an answer may be found in this astounding statement by our Lord: "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division [= Peleg!]; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" (Luke 12:51–53; cf. Matt. 10:34–36). God sent division as part of His gracious plan for His people.

I understand a little of what that division means. When I began my studies at Princeton University in the summer of 1942, I was deeply motivated as an only child to please my parents. They had worked hard to get me there, and I strove for excellent grades. But a radical change took place seven months later. One night, in my dormitory room at Pyne Hall, a gracious and godly Bible teacher led me to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I knew immediately that my life and my destiny had changed forever. I wanted to study the Bible and tell others about my Savior.

But what would my parents think of this radical change in career goals? Should I suppress this LIGHT and maintain family unity? Or should I reflect HIS LIGHT into the lives of my parents and risk years

of DIVISION? By God's mercy, I made the latter choice, and thirty years of spiritual division followed. However, in God's wisdom and love, the light that HE brought into our darkened home finally resulted, I believe, in the salvation of my father only a few months before he died in 1976. Without that LIGHT and the resulting DIVISION, there could have been NO SALVATION.

Has not this been a major part of God's gracious plan throughout the ages? He had to DIVIDE Adam and Eve from Satan in order that the LIGHT of the proto-Gospel could shine into their hearts (Gen. 3:15). He had to DIVIDE Noah and his family from a godless world in order that the message of RIGHTEOUSNESS might be preserved (2 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:7). When the desperate desire for outward, organizational unity begins to overshadow the priority of TRUTH, then theological and spiritual disaster begins to loom large on the horizon. The God-revealed plan for SEPARATION from error and evil is thus an absolutely vital part of his saving love (cf. George Zeller, *The Beauty of Separation*, The Middletown Bible Church, 349 East St., Middletown, CT 06457).

Thus, it was our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of history (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17), who DIVIDED ("peleged") mankind into many hundreds of linguistically isolated people-groups (and now over 6,000!). (See "Voices of the World," National Geographic map, August, 1999.) "He made from one [Adam] every nation of mankind . . . having determined . . . the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:26; cf. Deut. 32:8). This has become an enormous obstacle to Satan's plan to permeate and spiritually destroy every human being on earth with "the deep things" of demonic blasphemy and perversion (Rev. 2:24). (For a study of the amazing genetic/physical effects of isolation and inbreeding which resulted from the Babel dispersion, see Don Batten et al, "How did different 'races' arise?" in *Answers to the Four Big Questions* [Answers in Genesis, P.O. Box 6330, Florence, KY 41022], pp. 25–40).

Let us consider briefly the positive and the negative aspects of the Babel judgment with respect to God's love for the world (John 3:16). Positively, as we have seen, Babel has been God's enormous roadblock to Satan, just as the shorelines are God's post-Flood boundaries to the turbulent seas: "Thus far you shall come, but no farther; and here shall your proud waves stop" (Job 38:11). Billions of people today are thus relatively free from the total demonism that characterized mankind just before the Flood (Gen. 6:5) and at Babel, even though pockets of special Satanic power have appeared from time to time in places such as Sodom (Gen. 19) and Pergamum (cf. Rev. 2:13).

Negatively, however, linguistic pluralism has proven to be for the Church, weakened by centuries of theological and spiritual corruption, a great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel and the written Word of God, apart from occasional special divine enablement. The widespread use of Greek and Latin in the Roman Empire when the Church was created on the Day of Pentecost was God's provision for the Gospel message to reach millions of people in a relatively short period of time (Col. 1:23). But our Lord never intended the Gospel to be confined to Greek and Latin! He commanded us: "Make disciples of ALL the nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19).

Just ten days after His ascension, a great linguistic miracle occurred: “There were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And . . . they were each one hearing [the apostles] speak in their own language” (Acts 2:5,6). Not just Greek and Latin, but a dozen other languages are listed (vs. 9–11)! Here was Babel in reverse: in the days of Peleg the earth was DIVIDED; but in the days of the apostles thousands of people from many lands were UNITED for many months, “continuing with one mind . . . and continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42–46). This was a preliminary answer to our Lord’s prayer to His Father: “Keep them in Thy name . . . that they may be one, even as We are” (John 17:11). The ultimate answer to this marvelous prayer will surely occur one moment after the rapture, when we will all communicate perfectly with each other!

On the Day of Pentecost our Lord inaugurated His great program for removing the Babel language barriers that He Himself had erected. His Church, which is His Body and His Bride, was to break through every one of these thousands of cultural and linguistic walls, attracting people everywhere to the one true God by means of genuine love (John 13:35) and the pure Gospel (Rom. 10:9–15). Human isolation was to give way to SPIRITUAL UNITY and spiritual darkness to DIVINE LIGHT. “The Lord is . . . not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Church, however, has only partly succeeded in fulfilling the Great Commission. Several thousand languages, after 1,970 years, still have no part of the written Word of God. How tragic! How many of us will “suffer loss” at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15) because of disobedience to our Lord’s commands? Nevertheless, in the fullness of time, God will follow through with His stupendous reverse-Babel program. Redeemed Israel, especially through the ministry of the 144,000 during the last half of the 70th Week of Daniel, will preach “this Gospel of the Kingdom . . . in the whole world for a witness TO ALL THE NATIONS, and then the end shall come” (Matt. 24:15).

At the end of this age, all of God’s glorified people will sing a new song: “Thou . . . didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). Indeed, there will be “a great multitude . . . from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues . . . and they will cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Rev. 7:9–10). The curse of Babel, the division (peleg) of peoples, the separation of nations, and the confusion of tongues will end forever; and the wisdom and love of our great God, even in His judgments, will be understood in a new way by those who have put their trust in Him.

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