

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

We left off last time talking about Genesis chapter 10 verses 8 & 9. These verses tell us a man rose to a prominent place through the simple recognition of others. Then as we get to verse 10, we see another problem. Nimrod was not content to be just a man greatly revered by those who did so, or those who followed him without question believing it was his mission to take this idea of central leadership to a whole new level. In either case, the result would be that Nimrod would give life to that beast which the book of Revelation tells us, to this very day, all the world wonders after! (Rev. 13:1-10)

Earlier in Genesis, when talking about the sons of Adam and Eve, we see that after Cain killed his brother Abel, and was confronted by God for doing so, Cain went out from the presence of The Lord and built a city. Cain's city was the predecessor to the kind of activity Nimrod began in verse 10. A city is a way of obligating people to stay in a particular place and bow to what is told benefits the needs of the many. A city can be a way of life which entraps people into certain ideas and ways of thinking which can blind them to the wider opportunities of life. However, Nimrod began to build a “kingdom,” and a kingdom is all that and more! A kingdom is not just the attempt to blind and obligate. A kingdom is a fence. It is a realm of influence which is ruled by force. It can be said to be for the good of all. It can be known to be for the benefit of a few. It can be anywhere in-between these two extreme points. However, the point of starting a kingdom, regardless of how much force it does or does not take to initially implement, has to do with the belief that you, or a group of people, have the right to take in area, demanding that all who live in that area follow what you say. The ultimate goal of the kingdom idea is that of empire, where the entire world is your area of influence and thus under your rule. (Isa. 14) Nimrod would come the closest of any man to accomplishing this, mostly because he did not have to take in a very large area to encompass the camps of all the people living on the planet at the time. However, even his kingdom had a beginning!

The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel. This may not have been its name when this city was first built, but we know it became the name of the place after the tower incident. (Gen. 11:9) Thus, verse 10 uses the name as a way to make it clear, Nimrod was not jumping around experimenting with different things in different places. The place where the tower was later built was the same place Nimrod began to be a king and centralize power from the start. Verse 10 also gives the names of three more cities which were all initially ruled by Nimrod. This is important because anyone could rise to be the ruler of a house or family, even in spite of the fact they were not the first-born or traditionally the one who would be in line for the leadership role. However, Nimrod began to hold the leadership role over more than one family or tribal type unit. Nimrod's power began to spread out to control neighboring units. Presumably these units or cities were primarily ones which were built and inhabited by Cain's family in general; but it still shows something outside the normal development of family groups and the leadership roles they, by nature, develop.

If we jump down to verse 2 of chapter 11, it tells us the families of Noah's sons traveled together from Ararat where the ark had come to rest, to the land between and directly along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The name “Euphrates” coincides with one of the rivers mentioned as originally flowing through the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 2:10-14) Only God knows for certain if these two rivers are, in fact, in any way, the same rivers mentioned earlier. With all the changes the flood made to the landscape, it is possible that post-flood humans simply settled in this region and called one of the rivers by this name because it seemed like it fit the description, or reminded the sons of Noah of that region where they knew the Garden of Eden had once been. In any case, it is important to realize that the circumstances surrounding Nimrod's story here in chapter 10 are that all the people were staying together and living in one region called Shinar.

That being said, it is important to remember there was



still family divisions recognized, and as each family grew they would have had their own specific areas in the region in which to live. Remember that in earlier days of human history, people were far more agricultural minded than we are on this side of the industrial revolution. Spreading out across this valley and region was not about going out into the world at large, it was about having room for the herds of animals each would have had, as well as needed space for planting crops. In those times, cities would have been built out of the fact that once parents had adult children, these children would often build a house literally next door or even attached to the same house their parents lived in. They would farm and eventually become responsible for the ground their family used. When more space was needed or for various family relationship issues, a family unit or group of the family would go out to a new area and begin building a new "city."

No matter what the family relationship, these various cities did not fight among each other at the time just after the flood, so cooperation between them would have been easy. However, in spite of tradition and the distance between these cities, Nimrod became the authority over several of them. Now, the specific city called Babel was one of two things in the beginning of it all. It was either the place where Nimrod's direct family group lived, where Nimrod would have grown-up, or it was a place he had specifically chosen to build in order to have what we would call a capital city, today. There are two reasons to lean more to the idea that it was simply the housing conglomerate of his direct family. One is that the next verse talks about going out and specifically building. This tends to indicate that Babel, and likely the other three cities mentioned in verse 10, already existed and simply came to look at Nimrod as their leader. The second reason to believe Babel may have already been an established place is that the idea of having a capital city would have been a new idea at the time. It would not necessarily have been something Nimrod thought to do or that there was need for in the very beginning. This idea would have grown out of the events which were only then beginning to take place. Having a capital city would have been part of breaking the mold - so to speak - about how families lived their lives, and it likely came about in a very organic way.

Becoming like a capital city is the real difference from the norm which would have defined Babel as something special. No matter how it got started, it would have become the place where people could come and live under Nimrod's leadership no matter what their family ties. When it comes to the purpose of even having cities, this kind of thinking is just the way things are in most places around the world today. More and more, the practice of specifically living on the same piece of land as your family is even seen as a failure by children to make a life of their own. However, at the time, this thinking is what precipitates the later events and the specific fact Babel was where man chose to build the tower. This would be the beginning of looking at a government structure instead of natural family structure as the right thing for leadership and care.

Now again, because there would need to be more room for people to do agricultural activities, Babel would not be the only conglomerate of housing structures for people to live in, no matter how much people chose to be bound together under one leader. Babel would be a focal point, and a thriving city of sorts, but not a metropolis in any way as we would measure it today. Further technological advances in building and infrastructure would need to be developed before any city could be too large. This is why three other cities existed which were part of Nimrod's kingdom instead of everyone simply coming to live in Babel directly. This also worked out on a strategic level for Nimrod. Two of these cities were to the north of Babel along the Tigris river: Accad & Calneh. The third, Erech, was to the south; and like Babel, it was closer to the Euphrates. (see map on pg. 10) This gave Nimrod the power over the entire southern end of the valley; and as the rivers flowed down to the sea, Nimrod was positioned to control both rivers. Any river traffic going to or from the most accessible sea of the region would have to pass through, or at least by, cities under Nimrod's authority. This set Nimrod up for ruling the entire area of Shinar, where the families of Noah had gone after the flood to establish their lives; and thus, the lands beyond which they would need to move into as the population grew.

Once you grasp verse 10, verse 11 of Genesis chapter 10 holds some very interesting facts about the events which transpired. One is the fact we have already touched on about the next cities mentioned being "built." The second fact is the name it tells us of the one responsible for building these cities! Here is another place where people can get caught up on the verse separations; but to understand it, we need to follow the flow of what is being said as the text moves forward. Verse 11 says, "Out of that land..."; some ask, out of what land? The answer is simply, out of the land which Nimrod already ruled according to verse 10. People were living all over in the region called Shinar. However, Nimrod went out from the immediate area where natural growth would have taken place for his kingdom; and irrespective of where other families' natural growth may have taken them, Nimrod expanded his kingdom by building what could be called planned cities.

Verse 11 goes on to say, "...went forth Asshur,..." Who on earth is Asshur? Many Bible commentaries will simply tell you Asshur is a son of Cain. This is true, but he is not just any son of Cain. This is a bit of a long story, but many of us should be familiar with the fact that many centuries down the road from what Nimrod did, there was an empire called "The Assyrian Empire." What we also need to understand is that there was a region of "Assyria" before there was an empire. Assyrian is a masculine version of the name, and Assyria is a feminine version of the name. In today's world there is little left in the way of understanding what it really means to have masculine and feminine forms of words and context within our speech. In languages such as Spanish and the like, there is still recognition of masculine and feminine forms, but it is very much so a leftover of the ancient and more in-depthful

A Matter Of Life And Death

Part I

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

This writing is a question and answer segment which, Lord willing, we will present in parts over the next several issues of *Shaqah*. It covers a subject both timely and one which I have been asked countless times as I have taught the Word over the years. Many people wonder about death and what happens when we die. Many people ask about the dynamics of what happens when Jesus returns and the dead in Christ are resurrected while those alive and remaining who serve The Lord are caught up to meet Jesus in the air. What really concerns many people is the question of, what is the state of those who have died in the time between their death to the time of the resurrection? The questions can be posed in many different ways, and their focus can be on one of these points or another. However, the issues I just pointed to, along with others, are all involved in the answer no matter how the question(s) is asked.

The answer to these questions also grows more timely as each year passes and we see the events of this world fulfilling the things Jesus told us must happen before His return. That is precisely why this is a subject I have found myself teaching on more and more through the years. In spite of that, I have never sat down to write the answer so anyone who wants to can read it for themselves. The submission of this question has brought it about. As with any subject in God's Word there is more which could be said, but this answer covers the ground most people are anxious to hear about. The end result is simply this, if you have ever wondered about the issues of life and death, you're going to enjoy this series!

"Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven."

At first glance this question would appear to be about death, but in actuality this question is about life. We all know we will succumb to death someday, but what happens to that part of us which does not die? This requires us to look at how life works. This question is also about time, because we know we will simply keep walking this world in one way or another as we live in our bodies, but what do we do when the body functions no more? This requires us to also look at time and how it works. To look at both time and life from a Biblical perspective, we must do what we so often have to do, which is go all the way back to creation and talk about how it was all put together in the first place!

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we are told the creation story. The first thing God does is create the heavens and the earth. This is talking about things we only vaguely understand: like the fact our whole universe, mainly the space and material it consists of, was created. As humans, we have studied our

universe, but we still have no idea just how big it really is. This is why we simply call what is outside our planet's atmosphere, "outer space." It is the space outside the space we are familiar with and able to live in on a regular basis. The fact there would be a space created for us to specifically live in is exactly why it is stipulated in the opening words of Genesis that God created not just the heavens but also the earth.

Earth is that inner space where we can live and do what we do because of the environment it provides. However, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was not automatically any better for us than the rest of the space. Modern men like to poke fun at the fact people of the past thought the earth was the center of the universe, when today we know it's not even the center of our solar system. The center of our solar system is the sun, which is why we call it a "Solar System," instead of something such as a "Terra System." As to the entire universe? No human knows what the center of that might be! These facts notwithstanding, it's still a truth that this planet was and is a special place in the universe. Even if it is not the center of anything, it's our home, and the place God took special care in forming an environment for us to live in.

Now, a most interesting point to keep in mind is that even the sun was created, not in the beginning, but later in the process and specifically for our needs. As we move to verse 2 of Genesis chapter 1, we see it's dedicated to explaining the fact this world we know as home was nothing but a blank. The universe was dark, and The Spirit of God moved upon the surface of this planet, which according to the description, we can speculate it was covered in water. However, another interesting point is that even water did not behave just as we see it today. God would do different things with water to define its properties and use it in order to make our environment.

Before any of that work is done, we come to verse 3. Verse 3 is where God adds the energy source to our world, and it serves our understanding of God, and how powerful He is, to point out the sun itself was still not created, even here, as part of what God created in verse 3. Here, God only creates light! That's hard to understand because we believe light needs a source, but it was not until day four that God put the system fully in place which we know and believe we "understand" today.

Verse 4 tells us the fact light also had to be divided from darkness. As amazing as that phenomenon is - especially considering there was no sun or moon as yet - it's also at this point God is creating something which is crucial to our question. In verse 5 we are told, "And the evening and the morning

were the first day.” This was not simply because the first day had finally passed, it was that until this point, in this new universe of ours, there were no days and nights to count. What God did in verse 4, by dividing the darkness from the light, is create the repeating cycle we know as day and night, which is then referred to in verse 5. In dividing the darkness from light, God created time itself, at least in the way we know and were meant to live in it. This is crucial to our question because, first, we need to understand God does not live in our time like we do; He created it! God did not need a cycle of day and night to create our universe. He created the heavens, the earth, and even light itself, before the confines of day and night ever existed, or even could exist. After God divided the light from the dark, creating the repeating cycle of day and night, He proceeded to create everything else in this creation within those confines and to adhere to those confines. The point we must understand is simply this: God did not do this because He had to, He did it because it is the way He wanted it; and because of this, it is our universe which is confined by the thing we call time, but God Himself is not!

Now, some would argue day and night are just our earth's way of dividing, marking and showing time's passage. They would argue the rest of the planets which we know of, and even the moon, have differing cycles of light and dark. This is true, but again, I repeat the fact, the sun and the moon did not exist until day four. The dividing of times and seasons, which are the differences one is referring to when talking about anything outside this planet's cycle of day and night, were also specifically pointed out as being created on day four along with, and by the creation of the sun, moon and other lights of the universe! (Gen. 1:14-19) We must never forget that God is much larger than we are. He can do things which are outside our understanding. Time is certainly one of those things which man has trouble wrapping his head around, and certainly there have been great debates among men as to exactly how it works and whether it can be manipulated. However, just as light can exist without a source - which is something we do not understand because God constrained light to a source on day four long before our creation - so too, time is something we will never fully understand. The simple fact is, God made it for us to live in. That's what we do and that's all we know!

The fact God was creating time as we know it is crucial to our understanding of the question at hand, because we need to see that time was created for the cycles we have and know here in our physical universe and space. It was created so we could live in - what I like to call - a one foot in front of the other kind of life. At first glance, this may seem like an odd point, but the fact this kind of division between light and dark (day and night) did not exist until God began to create what He wanted for us is important to our understanding of death; because the death we are talking about in this question is the death of our physical form. Simply put, our physical form is what connects us to this universe as well as the time God created it to run on!

This fact just becomes clearer as we go back to the creation sequence and see how life was created. As we work our way down through the facts which lead up to the creation of life, we see on day two God created an atmosphere for this

planet by manipulating the water which was already on the surface of our world. On day three, God makes the water gather so the dry land could appear. Then God does the next thing which is specifically important to our question. In Genesis 1:11 God says, “Let the earth bring forth...” and with a few specifics beyond this, God brings forth the plant life of this planet. This is the first appearance of “life” in the cycle. Up until now, God has been putting elements in place which would make a way for life to operate in the way we see that it does, but here is where that life begins. What we want to see is two simple points. One, God does this the same way He did the things He did up until now: He “speaks” life into existence. This truth will continue to be the case for everything we see throughout the remaining days of creation, with one exception. The second point is, God did not speak life into existence. I know that is a direct contradiction to what I just said the first point was, but that is because English is a strange and very weak language!

My point is simply this, God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. They simply did not exist before He spoke them into existence. God says, “Let there be light: and there was light.” Genesis 1:3 God actually divided the light from the darkness, which while being something we don't comprehend, the first point about God creating everything, including physical space itself, is something we do not, in truth, comprehend! Then God speaks life into existence, which is also something we do not really understand! However, what the Bible is showing us is a fact we should never forget when considering anything we see in the here and now; and again, that is the fact God is far more than we can completely grasp!

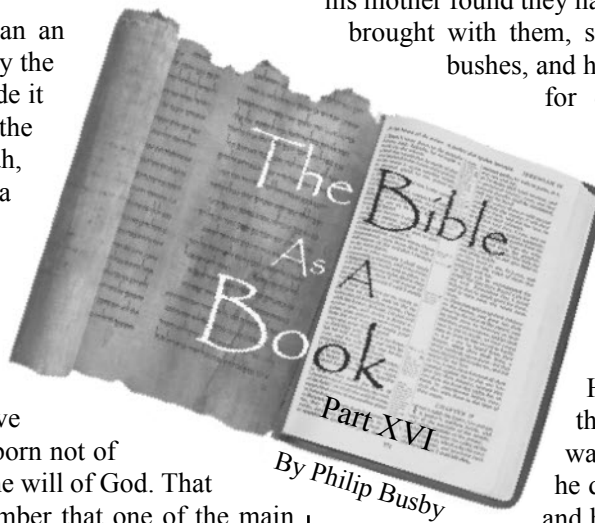
Romans chapter 1, in talking about the fact humans know God exists, says not only do they fail to worship God as their Creator, they desire not to even maintain the knowledge of His existence in their minds. Verse 22 makes the point clear by saying, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...” About the greatest example of this has to be those who accept the theory of evolution! At the core of this theory is the idea life can come from nonlife all on its own. However, in denying the creation story, they are in a way accepting it, at the same time!

God did not just speak life into existence; however, verse 11 of Genesis chapter 1 tells us, God did do something which is why an evolutionist can point to anything which appears credible in saying life began from nonlife. What God does is command the earth to bring forth plant life! As we go down through the process, we find God repeats this again and again. This is not God using evolution to create the world, because a process of evolution could not have taken place until God created our world. Plus, after God commanded the earth to bring forth plant life, He did not leave it to morph and mutate into all other life forms. God specifically commands the water to bring forth the animal life in it, and the earth to bring forth the animal life which would live upon it. It's also specified this life would reproduce after its kind - which constrains an animal to be an animal, and a plant to be a plant, even within certain categories and subcategories. Now, what is important

In our last segment, we began an overview of the book of Genesis. By the end of our last segment we had made it to the birth of Isaac, who was the promised son of Abraham and Sarah, through which God would build a nation dedicated to His purposes. Just as God had told them, in spite of their age, Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son who was truly their son. This son would be a type of Christ because Abraham and Sarah could not, at their age, have had a son on their own. Isaac was born not of the will of the flesh but strictly of the will of God. That being said, it is important to remember that one of the main points of Isaac's existence is/was that he would be the paternal son of both his mother as well as his father. In contrast, Jesus was not physically of either his father or mother, which is a point we need to understand. This is why we say people or things in the Bible are types of Christ. Nothing in this world could be exactly like Christ except Christ Himself, so different people and things are used to symbolize different facets of The Messiah. Isaac would symbolize the fact God can and will bring forth those things in this world which are needed to fulfill his plan for mankind in spite of the weaknesses of men.

After Isaac is born, Abraham again wastes no time following the commandments which God had told him to. Abraham circumcised Isaac when Isaac was only eight days old, just as Abraham had been commanded to do for all males born in his house. In the course of time, Isaac was weaned and Abraham threw a big feast to celebrate. During this feast, Sarah was reminded of the mistake they had made in Abraham having a son using Sarah's handmaiden Hagar. Sarah was worried about her son growing up alongside Hagar's son Ishmael. Sarah also did not want there to be any dispute as to who was the true family heir. Thus, she asks Abraham to send Hagar and her son Ishmael away. This is not something Abraham wanted to do, because as a righteous man, Abraham loved his children no matter who the mother was and no matter how they were born. Abraham knew he was responsible for taking care of Ishmael. However, God tells Abraham to use the opportunity to separate Ishmael from Isaac. God tells Abraham not to worry because God Himself would take the responsibility for Ishmael's care. Just as God had already made clear to Hagar during her attempt to run away from Abraham's house, Ishmael would not only survive, but be a great nation because he was the son of Abraham. Abraham, once again, does not question God but does as he is instructed.

At the time, Abraham was dwelling near the far southern end of what would eventually be the promised land of Israel, so Hagar and Ishmael go out into the wilderness of Beersheba. Ishmael would have been a young teenager of about 14 or so years old at the time, but he did not have survival skills. When



his mother found they had run out of the water which they had brought with them, she simply lays Ishmael under some bushes, and has no idea what to do next but to wait for death. However, God, once again, speaks with Hagar. God sent an angel to tell Hagar that He had heard the crying of Ishmael, and that she should believe in what God had promised about Ishmael becoming a nation. Hagar was not to give up, but believe in God's provisions and take care of her son. As Hagar obeys God, she looks up to see that God had provided her with the water they needed. As Ishmael grows up, he develops skills - specifically archery - and his mother finds him a wife out of the same people she was descendant from - the Egyptians. Eventually, Ishmael would beget twelve princes whose general Biblical designation is the Ishmaelites, and they would comprise the prominent bloodline of those known as Arab in later times.

After Abraham sends Ishmael and Hagar away, Abraham once again has dealings with Abimelech the king of the Philistines. Because Abimelech knew God was with Abraham, Abimelech urges Abraham that they make a covenant with each other, to be good to each other even in the following generations. Abraham reproves Abimelech at this time for having already stolen a well which belonged to Abraham, but Abimelech says he did not know about it and all Abraham needed to do was come to him about such things. Abimelech also agrees to make it right. Abraham and Abimelech, as the rightful rulers of their respective house and nation, agree to be good to each other, and make a peace treaty - of sorts - with each other. We should see that this relationship was brought about by God. The Philistines had great knowledge of the sea. If the Philistines had held to their relationships with God's people in later generations as Israel comes out of Egypt, there would have been great benefit to all the world. More than just commerce would have went out with them, and God's Word would have quickly spread! We will never know how much God could have done in this world if man had listened to His voice and taken the opportunities He brought about!

As Isaac grew and became the man Abraham's bloodline needed to begin a specific nation, God asked Abraham to do the unthinkable. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. This would seem to go against all God had been preparing. However, God was giving Abraham an ultimate test to see if he not only was generally obedient to God's commandments, but if he had grown to be fully trusting that God was in control of the plan to develop the chosen nation. Without question, Abraham obeyed God; and as Isaac was no longer a child by this time, the story shows us Isaac was, at the very least, completely obedient to his father. As Abraham and Isaac approached the mountain God had sent Abraham to in order to

accomplish this act - which is the same place where the temple would stand in Jerusalem many centuries later - they left the servants behind and went on, just the two of them. Isaac would ask his father, who had all the provisions for sacrifice, where the sacrifice itself was? In response, Abraham would tell Isaac the basis of salvation for all mankind. Abraham told Isaac, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." Genesis 22:8

When they made it to the place, Abraham built an altar, laid out the wood, bound his son, put him on the altar and got so far as to take hold of the knife in order to slay Isaac, then God stopped Abraham. Again, Isaac would serve as a type of Christ in that he was to be sacrificed by his father Abraham who was a type of God The Father. Abraham was right, God The Father was willing to provide the ultimate sacrifice the world needed in sacrificing His only begotten son Jesus. (John 3:16-21) However, again, only God could accomplish this and actually sacrificing Isaac was not necessary to fulfill the illustration. On that day, so long ago, God gave Abraham a ram to sacrifice instead of his son; and Abraham would reemphasize the truth he had told Isaac in that Abraham would call the name of that place "Jehovahjireh," which means "God will provide." On that mountain God would confirm to Abraham, as well as Isaac, that His covenant with them was true. God would use Abraham and his son Isaac to form the nation through which The Messiah would come and bless the entire world!

After this proving, the day would come for that first generation of the chosen people to begin to pass on. Sarah would die at the age of 127 years old. Sarah would die in Hebron which is one of those places very familiar by then to their sojourning in the land of Canaan, and Abraham would solidify their presence in the land by buying a cave from yet another family which in later years is part of the events of Israel's history - the Hittites. The cave Abraham bought that day would serve as a burial place for Abraham and for most of the next two generations of his family which held to the covenant. This burial place would also be right on the doorstep of the southern entrance to Canaan, which was the intended entrance into the land for the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt. (Num. 13:25-14:25)

Some time in this period, Abraham had also received the news that his brother Nahor, who had stayed in the Mesopotamia valley when Abraham, his father, and Lot left over ninety years before, had beget several children with his wife Milcah. (Gen. 11:27-32) This was important information because Isaac's line needed to be genetically distinct. Ishmael had taken an Egyptian wife, and Egyptian blood along with other blood from those living in the region would later be a part of the nation which came from Isaac. However, for there to be the development of an indisputably unique bloodline to define God's chosen nation throughout the millenniums to come, there needed to be a more distinct base for Isaac's descendants. It may have been fine for Ishmael and the sons of Lot to simply become the predominate people in the region, simply absorbing and displacing those who currently lived there; but for God to develop a specific nation for His purposes, there needed to be more genetic distinction. Abraham, through God's leading,

knew this and wanted to do what he could to make sure it came out right.

Abraham was getting along in years and he did not want himself or his son to leave the land God had brought them to and potentially get trapped physically, emotionally, or otherwise, back in the place where they had come from. At the same time, Abraham knew this was the right place to get a wife for his son Isaac. Thus, Abraham sends his head servant back to the Mesopotamian valley to his brother's house for this purpose. This servant was a type of The Holy Ghost, as it is The Holy Ghost's job to secure the bride of Christ for His return, (John 16:7-16) just as it was this servant's job to secure Isaac's bride. The servant would travel to Abraham's former homeland and pray that God would give him success for his master's sake. God would lead this servant to the very well of water Abraham's brother's family used. There the first person he would run into was the very woman meant to be Isaac's bride - Rebekah.

Rebekah takes the servant directly back to her father's house, and after meeting her family and telling the story about how it had all come about, Rebekah's family agreed it must be of God. However, Abraham's fears about his son going back to this place were justified in that the servant was urged by the family to at least stay for a few days, as they did not want to see Rebekah go. However, being a servant who loved and obeyed his master, the servant only spent the night and was ready to return. As surely God had prepared Rebekah's heart, she gladly agreed to go with him, which was her family's criteria about whether or not they would let them go, and they were sent on their way.

Rebekah would become Isaac's wife, and we are told after this that Abraham also takes a wife once again. Many may find it hard to believe that Abraham would take another wife after Sarah, considering he would have been about 137 years old when Sarah died. However, Abraham did just that, begat six more sons, and lived long enough to see those six sons grow up to the point he could send them out into the world. This is all part of the promise God made to Abraham that he would be the father of not just one or two nations, but of many nations! In the end, Abraham would only give portions of what he had to these six sons; and the true inheritance of the covenant as well as all the household Abraham had, by the hand of God, built, would go to Isaac!

Abraham would live to see his one hundred seventy-fifth year before he would pass from this world, outliving Sarah by almost forty years. Proving they had some kind of continuing relationship, it would be Isaac and Ishmael who would bury Abraham in the cave he had bought for Sarah. The covenant would now pass to Isaac in full; but much like Sarah, Rebekah would be unable to have children. Isaac would pray about this issue and no doubt wonder, as his father had, how it would be possible for a nation to be brought forth when he could have no children. However, in due season God would open Rebekah's womb and she would conceive twin boys who would literally begin fighting in the womb. God told Rebekah that in her was not just the nation of chosen people, but two nations.

Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born. The eldest named Esau would be born with his brother Jacob right behind him holding onto his heel. As they grew, Esau would become a man of the outdoors, and an accomplished hunter. Jacob would be just the opposite. Jacob was fair skinned and spent his time indoors. Esau would be favored by his father and Jacob by his mother; but most importantly, Jacob would greatly desire the covenant of God and Esau would not! One day, Esau would come in tired and hungry from a day out in the fields. Jacob was cooking a stew. When Esau came in, he desired that Jacob give him the stew to eat; and Jacob took the opportunity to ask his brother if he would sell his birthright as the first born, in order to get it? Esau cared so little for the covenant of God which was his birthright, that he told Jacob he could have it, mocking that his birthright would do him no good if he died from not having anything to eat right then. This trade would set the stage for later events!

Sometime after this, there came a great famine in the land, and Isaac traveled south heading for Egypt to look for food. As he was coming through the land of the Philistines, God spoke to Isaac and told him he should stay in the land of Canaan and not leave for Egypt. God also confirmed to Isaac that the covenant now belonged to him and God would indeed bring to pass the promise that the land would someday belong to his descendants. Isaac obeyed and stayed in an area just to the northwest of Beersheba where Abraham and Abimelech had made their peace treaty. Abimelech, or a son bearing the same name or title, was still the ruler of the Philistines, and Isaac dwelt with them. Here Isaac makes the same choice his father had made several decades before, in that he feared the people because Rebekah was so beautiful; and so as people inquired about Rebekah, he told them she was his sister, omitting the fact she was his wife. One day Abimelech happened to see Isaac and Rebekah "sporting" with each other in a way only a husband and wife should. Abimelech confronted Isaac about the issue and was very upset, because he no doubt remembered or knew about what happened to his house years earlier when an attempt to take Isaac's mother was made. (Gen. 20) Abimelech feared God's judgment for doing something bad against God's servant, and thus alleviated Isaac's fears by commanding that anyone who touched Isaac or Rebekah would be put to death!

For a time, as with Abraham, Abimelech would not attempt to drive Isaac out of the land. As Isaac remained there, during a time of great famine, he would plant crops, and in one year he would see a return of one hundred fold. This kind of good favor would continue for Isaac, and he would be very prosperous in all that he did. However, as Isaac grew and prospered, the Philistines became very jealous. "And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we." Genesis 26:16 By this time, Isaac had developed some confidence, and he did not go far. Isaac moved to a valley in the area. Now, after Abraham died, the Philistines had taken the opportunity to stop up all the wells Abraham had dug in that region. In a way it was as if they were attempting to erase any claim Abraham's family might have on the land. At this time, Isaac began to open up the wells which had been dug in his father's day, and Isaac also brought back the names

his father had called the various places. This re-established his family's presence on the land, a presence which Abimelech was well aware of! For a time, in spite of their peace treaty, the Philistines continued to cause strife over the water; but Isaac just kept digging until he had outpaced their ability to claim all the wells and his family was once again settled in the area.

After this, Isaac went specifically to Beersheba; and there God appeared to Isaac again and told Isaac not to fear because God was working everything out just as He had promised Abraham He would. Isaac built an altar and worshiped God there, and there Isaac would pitch his tent. His servants would go out and begin re-digging the well there also; and it was here, as he did with Abraham, that Abimelech would come to Isaac to ask for a peace agreement which Isaac would agree to. All this would more permanently establish the name of that place as Beersheba, which means "Well of the oath," and in later generations, the nation of Israel's northern and southern borders would be referred to as from Dan to Beersheba. (II Sam. 3:10)

As Isaac's family continued in the land, his two sons would continue to grow and show their concern, or lack thereof, for the covenant God had laid on their family. At the age of forty, Esau showed his ultimate unconcern for the covenant and what needed to be done in order to fulfill it, by marrying from among the people of the land. In fact, Esau married not one but two women, both of them Hittites. This displeased his father and mother greatly. However, in spite of this, when Isaac was old and ready to bestow upon one of his sons the blessing, inheritance, and leadership of all his household, it was still Esau whom Isaac called for.

Isaac told Esau that he should go out and hunt for wild game and from it make him a fresh batch of "savory meat," which was obviously one of Isaac's favorite meals. Once he did this, Isaac would bestow upon him the family blessing which traditionally belonged to the oldest son. We cannot say for sure if Isaac was aware of the trade Esau had made for his birthright or not. However, Isaac is old and may not have been thinking of it or understood the agreement in truth. In any case, Esau never mentions to his father that the blessing was no longer rightfully his just because he was the first-born. Esau breathes not a word about the fact he had traded his birthright to his brother Jacob for just one meal. If he had, it may have simply been Isaac's choice to bestow the blessing on Esau in spite of this. The story makes it pretty obvious that whomever Isaac blessed, for whatever the reason, that person became the rightful heir of the house. In the same confidence and carelessness which caused Esau to trade his birthright for just one meal, Esau simply goes his way to do as his father had requested.

What he did not realize or maybe care about, was that his mother Rebekah heard this conversation. Knowing Esau would be gone for some time on his hunt, she calls for Jacob. She had devised a plan for tricking Isaac into believing Jacob was Esau, by slaughtering two young goats to make the meal Isaac wanted and using the goat's skins to make Jacob seem hairy like his brother. She also put some of Esau's clothes on

Jacob so he would smell like Esau. Jacob was concerned his father would find him out and curse him instead of bless him; but Rebekah shrugged this off by saying the curse would be upon her not Jacob, and he should just do as she asked. Jacob did go into his father, who was skeptical, because while Isaac had lost his sight he could still hear, feel, and smell just fine. Isaac questioned Jacob's voice, but in feeling his hands and smelling his clothing, Isaac became enough convinced that it was Esau, he bestowed the blessing on Jacob.

Now, Jacob just barely made it out of the room before his brother Esau returned with the meal he had made for his father, in hand. Isaac is greatly troubled in that he does not understand what happened, knowing it is truly Esau who is before him at that moment. However, Isaac can by tradition do nothing once the blessing had been given. The only blessing he could give Esau was that the world would be his to go out and take, and that once Esau had made a name for himself he would no longer be considered a part of the same house, but break away to be a people of his own.

This story is an example of how God uses the circumstances of men to accomplish His will, even at times when man is not following righteousness like he should. Jacob should not have lied to his father in telling him he was Esau. Just as Esau should have told or reminded Isaac that he had sold his birthright to his brother, Jacob should have taken that same route. Jacob should have gone in and made his case that Esau did not care about the birthright and in being willing to trade it away so frivolously he did not deserve the blessing. Rebekah could have backed up Jacob in this by making the same argument to Isaac that caused her to want to take the path of deception in the first place. That argument was that it had done no good for Isaac to take Rebekah from among the family in Mesopotamia if their sons were simply going to take wives from among the people of Canaan as Esau had done! Unfortunately, this is not what happened. However, in the end, the son who cared about the covenant of God did receive the blessing and with it the inheritance of the covenant.

This incident would also serve to ensure Jacob would not take a wife from among the people of Canaan. Esau was, of course, very angry about what had happened, and determined that once their father was gone, he would kill Jacob. Rebekah heard about this as well and wanted Jacob to go live with her family until Esau's anger had time to diminish. At this point, Rebekah did plead with Isaac about the wife issue and Isaac himself ended up sending Jacob to Mesopotamia to live among Rebekah's family and take a wife from there. All this meant Jacob would be separated from his family and live in what essentially was an exile - of sorts - for many years. Jacob would not be able as his father and grandfather were, to ensure the continuance of his house in the land of Canaan. Whatever claims on the land, etc. which Abraham and Isaac had obtained, would mostly be lost as Isaac was too old to maintain them, and Esau would begin to build for himself.

When Esau saw that Isaac cared enough about the wife

issue that he would send Jacob away with the commandment to take a wife from among Rebekah's family and not a Canaanite, and that Jacob obeyed, Esau decided he would attempt to please his father by taking a wife from Ishmael's family. This would be Esau's third wife which would go a long way in assuring that Esau's bloodline would become a nation as well, but it was not God's plan for developing a chosen nation. Just like Ishmael's and Lot's sons, Esau's bloodline would not be as genetically distinct as it needed to be from the people of the land. This, along with the sins of the people and eventual nations they became, is why today we have little to no ability to trace or distinguish any of these people other than to say they are what comprises a great part of the general non-Jewish population which live in the middle east today. While the Jewish people, in spite of being scattered across the world for many centuries, to this day, have a distinct genetic marker which can be preserved, and identified!

This is why Jacob and Esau also are a typology of the way humanity overall is interacting with God's plan. Just as we all are sons of Adam and Eve whom God created in the very beginning, people such as Lot and Ishmael were all part of the same family which God eventually used to develop a specific people who would be called the people of God. However, they would end up completely on the outside of God's plan because of the choices they made. There was no genetic need for Abraham to send his servant back to Mesopotamia to get a wife for Isaac, when Lot and his wife, who had come with Abraham from there, comprised the same genetic relationship to Abraham. Lot's family had the opportunity to meld right in to being part of God's chosen nation. However, Lot decided to separate from Abraham not just in the distance they needed to have the great possessions they obtained, but in involving himself with the people of the land and their sinful practices.

Ishmael was not just part of the family Abraham came from. Ishmael was a direct son of Abraham. It was not God's will that Ishmael be the bloodline of the chosen nation, and with an Egyptian mother it could not have been so. However, Ishmael's family was built by the promise and blessings of God in spite of this. Ishmael's family became an important and dominant people in the region. However, they did not maintain and take advantage of the tremendous blessings their family ties with Isaac's later descendants could have meant for them: Israel; The Word of God; and thus, the world as a whole. Sadly this is still true even today!

Esau is perhaps the most obvious example: not just a person in the family; not just a son of Abraham; but the first born son of Isaac, who was the specific son of Abraham to whom God's covenant passed. The blessing was his, pure and simple, yet he did not care about it. Worldly pleasures and possessions meant more to him than the things of God which were his for the taking. He did not just fail to take an opportunity, or see one, he rejected a birthright!

Let's stay in God's Word!

A Matter Of Life And Death continued from pg. 4

to our understanding of death, is the fact God created life by using already existing physical elements as the pieces! This is why, yes, we see plants and animals as being made from the same elements which the universe is made from; but the truth remains, it did not happen all on its own.

Remember, not only does evolution fail to tell us where life came from, it cannot tell us where the nonlife elements of the universe came from, except to say it was all compressed together before a great explosion scattered it into space, which they also do not explain where it came from. If you're willing to swallow that camel, you might as well believe life somehow, with enough heat, pressure, time and the like, also came from what already existed and for no good reason. However, thinking this makes more sense than the creation story of Genesis, is believing you're wise, and becoming a fool. Believing this makes no sense in a far greater way than believing God did it all! The Bible tells us there is a God Who created us for a purpose, Who is so large we can't really comprehend all that He is. He, being something more than we can comprehend, would be able to create what we know, which no matter where you start from has to have some explanation for its existence.

No matter how you slice it, the teachers of evolution should be truthful in that, at the very least, they should let people know the theory is not scientific! Humans, with all their knowledge, cannot duplicate the process of bringing life from nonlife. They cannot bring something from nothing, and even their theory does not attempt to get around this second point. They cannot prove any of the beginning core principles needed to make evolution a reality are possible, and without that proof, you are simply attempting to explain what exists by looking at the fact it exists! Why should we believe an accident could or would bring into existence time, space, matter, and life itself? The answer according to the book of Romans is: only a fool would believe; and we become foolish enough to believe such things because we desire to reject the very existence of God who created all things!

Because we know God created all things, we can observe how God created those things to operate, knowing it is God's will and not an accident. To know about physical death, all we have to do is observe the bodies of plants and animals after life slips away. Their bodies do not remain intact. Because physical life is the animation of nonliving elements which were created on the first day of creation, the bodies of physical things, once life has gone, eventually go back to being the same exact thing as the dirt you walk upon. The only way for dirt to be part of life is for it to be processed by plants into being part of what they are as an already living organism. In turn, other living things - such as the animals and humans - eat the plants and make them part of what they are. As the saying goes: you are what you eat! It's a cycle of events, and even this is not life from nonlife; this is life using the elements of nonlife to build with, just as God commanded it to be. Being able to ingest, in one form or another, the elements around you in order to grow and sustain is, in many ways, the basic

definition and difference between physical life and physical nonlife.

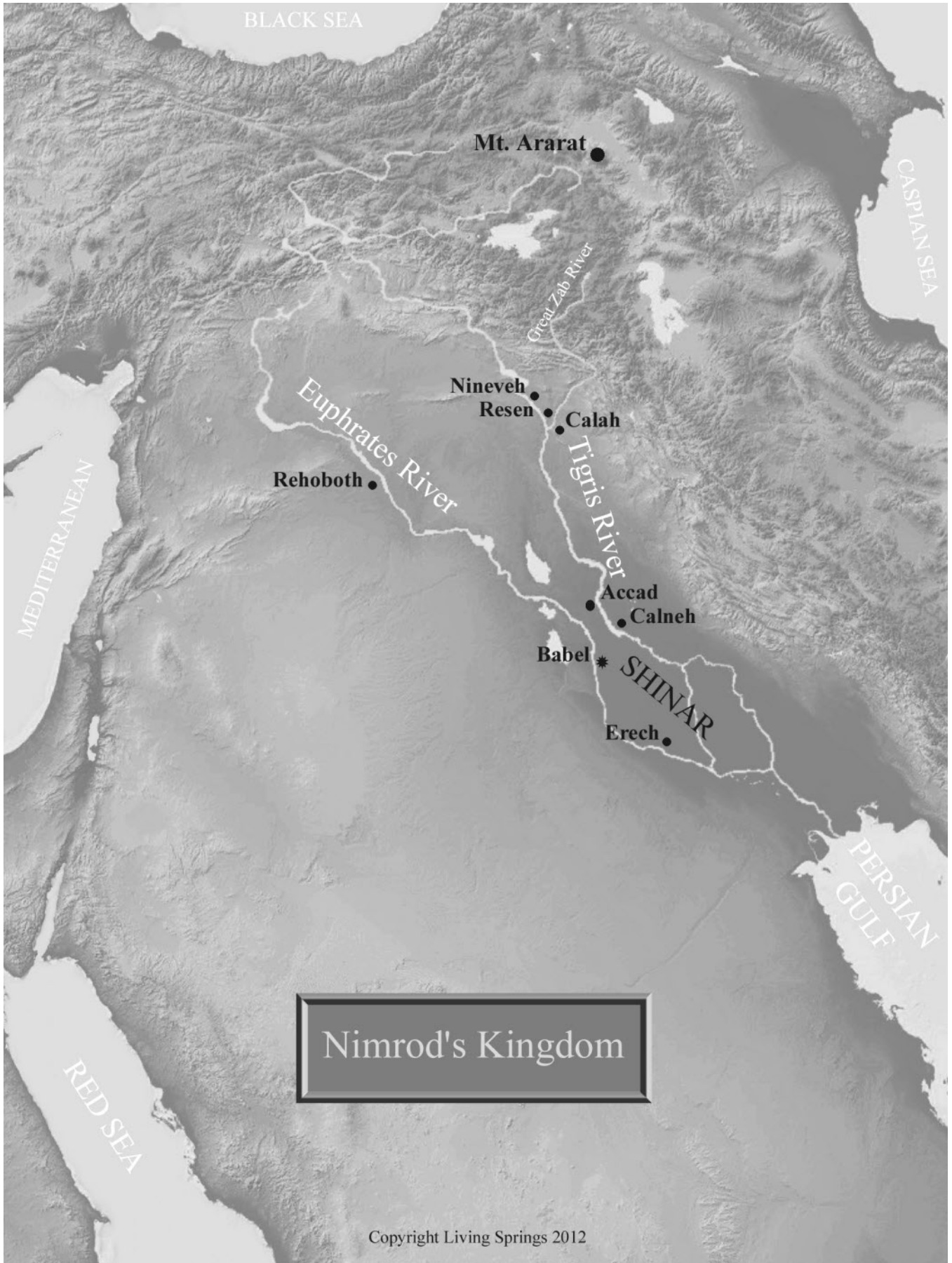
On top of this is the fact, the only way for "new" life to spring forth is for those things which are already alive to procreate and propagate. Even this is debatable as to whether we should call it "new" life, because the physical dynamics of procreating and propagating are much the same as any growth process we see in any individual living thing. It takes a piece of already existing life to generate any new individual life form; and the new individual must grow from there, using the same process of ingesting other elements, which is the process used to sustain any other life which already exists. The bottom line is this: physical life and physical death are not really very far removed from each other. The only thing which separates them is that God put the life energy in motion by animating nonliving things, and the only reason it still exists today is because the cycles God put in place continue just as He created them to.

Man may think there is hope for life to come out of nonlife, but this again is just a foolish thought which comes only because man does not want to have to depend on God. What we observe about life is just the opposite. Life succumbs to death everyday, and nonlife never raises itself up, all by itself, to live. God made physical elements which would not exist without Him. Then God animated some of those elements in very specific ways and for very specific purposes, which also would not have happened without Him. If the purpose for these elements no longer remains, they, whether living or not, will simply cease to exist. (Rev. 21:1) "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Romans 14:7-9

We should all understand the temporal nature of what our physical world is, and thus our physical time and life. We ask about death because we see it as the temporal nature of our personal being, but all which surrounds us is also temporal! As mortals, we wonder about death from the standpoint of the question, if we are going to die, why live? When you stop to consider the fact all which surrounds us is only here and will only be here because God created it and desires it to continue, that is a very good question indeed. Without writing a book on that subject alone, I will simply say, this is the base question God wants us to ask and which should lead us to seek the gift of eternal life God and only God is and can offer, no matter what "sacrifice" needs to be made in order to obtain that gift!

In our next segment, we will talk more about the core reasons we question death so much, which will take us into a discussion about the different elements God created humans to consist of. Until then, I pray you will grow in His assurance and comfort, as you prepare your life to meet The Lord at His return!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip Busby.***



Nimrod's Kingdom

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FBS continued from pg. 2

languages from which they derive. Those of you who have read a lot of what I have written know I am not fond of our modern languages. I'm not an advocate of everyone attempting to learn ancient Greek or anything of the sort, but our resistance to doing anything more with our current languages besides following only what can be found in a dictionary is not the advancement of society, as much as it is the stagnation. That being said, I will get back to what we are talking about.

The point is that understanding masculine and feminine in language is something we have mostly lost and will likely never re-obtain, in truth. However, to understand the past it helps to grasp the concept at least a bit. At its core, masculine and feminine are just what might come to your mind to begin with. They can show something on opposing sides, and it does not have to be a negative, fighting kind of opposition. It's just the fact you are talking about one side of things or the other. We also do not understand masculine and feminine as much in today's world because more and more people are rejecting this most simple and basic fact. Barring the fact there can be things which do not go exactly like they should in the womb, every human is born a male or a female. This is not to say one is greater than the other, which has a lot to do with what drives people to fight the facts, but just that there are two different physical outcomes which naturally occur in how a human body is formed. Those outcomes naturally dictate the base instincts and reactions which individuals have to various life encounters. This is seen in its most basic level by the toys boys and girls tend to migrate to. Because by nature being female means you are physically designed to be the bearer of children, females often are drawn to play with baby dolls. Because they are designed to be more of the protector and provider, boys are more drawn to play with tools or weapons. Today, there are many people who will tell you this is mostly a learned behavior due to society pressures, but they are wrong! If they were right, the world would be a whole different place when it comes to humans, and masculine and feminine in our speech would certainly never have existed. The Bible makes it clear that "...male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27 What is wrong is that we do not believe in the structure God gave us and therefore attempt to reject even our base physicality. Talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face. It doesn't get much worse than that.

Feminine comes with the sense of nurturing or caring on a comfort level. Just as most children are more apt, whether male or female, to run to their mother for comfort rather than their father. The masculine sense is more of one that has to do with strength and raw power. This is seen in the fact men desire to build machines and the like. Assyria, as a country or region with the idea of centralized government, was about the provision of comfort. It's kind of like what we talked about when discussing the curse of the ground told to Adam. (Gen. 3:17-19) Most humans could survive eating grass, but many people would tell you they would rather not survive if that is

what we had to eat. God told Adam he would have to work by the sweat of his brow to eat bread, and bread is more of what we want to eat. For many people around the world, bread is the most basic thing they will eat regularly.

In similar fashion, anybody can live in a basic structure for a house. This is why we still refer to the idea as, "Having a roof over our heads." If it has to be just that basic, we would rather have that than nothing; but just like with food, we would like to have something more than a roof. This something more goes into every corner of our lives. Food, housing, clothing, and all the comforts of modern technology have to do with providing something which is not just the basics. Humans desire, what is for lack of a better term, luxuries. Because men are more prone than women to be satisfied with a one-room cabin, a fireplace, a bed, one comfortable chair, and their dog by their side, luxuries are associated with the feminine rather than masculine side. No matter how comfortable the living conditions of the day may or may not have been, the thought of, if we all pull together then happy we'll be, made having a central leader who could facilitate that seemed to be a luxury. Having a great leader such as Nimrod was perceived to be, who could potentially handle the problems which came up instead of those problems being an individual or small family group's responsibility, was thought of as a luxury. People felt safe and like there was more of a plan for their lives going forward, with one central leader. The land of Assyria, which was developed by Nimrod's actions, was the first place to exist where there was this "civilization," and archaeological records confirm this fact. Thus, even after the confounding of the languages, for a very long time this region was still the heart of what people remembered as the good old days!

Now, the later empire called by the same name was given a masculine version of the word, "Assyrian." This was done because, unlike the hope many individuals hold, the truth is that an empire is not about luxury or comfort for all the individuals involved as much as it's about power, and the power of centralized leadership to build mankind as a whole. When people talk about world peace, they are not always talking about the same thing. World peace to one may be the idea that everyone is free to follow their dreams without man's hostility toward each other getting in the way. To others, world peace may be that there is cooperation so a one world government can provide all basic - or more than that - needs, in spite of the fact this may squelch many people's personal desires. To others, world peace means everyone conforming to one specific religion or basic set of guidelines. No matter what the thought, the idea of empire has always been that centralizing government authority is the key to providing some form of greatness to humanity. It started here with Nimrod, and even men such as Adolf Hitler believed what they were/are doing is for the good of all.

God confounded human language because completely centralizing authority - especially when God is not that authority - is a bad thing; and that is mostly because it drives

God out of people's hearts, as well as squelches the individuality God created us to have. Because confounding languages preserves individuality, later times would clearly see attempts at empires having to be incorporated by the use of force, and a lot of it! While the provisions of a great leader may be a luxury, or perceived as such, there is no doubt that the force necessary to build an empire relates more to a masculine side of things. This is why the names are different but only slightly; and that brings us back to the question of, who is Asshur? Well, the name Assyria simply means, "The land of Assur." One should note that Assur is simply Asshur with the letter "h" left out, and we will come back to this. "Assur" means "water boundary," and some would say this is because of the fact it comes from a city in the area which was situated between two smaller rivers. However, this is not taking it back far enough. Even that city was named for the same reason the region is named, not the other way around.

In our last segment, we talked about the verses just proceeding the ones we are talking about now; and they tell us how Nimrod began to be looked at. Verse 9 summarizes this issue by saying, "...wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." Remember, people knew there was One True God. They were not far enough removed from the flood and the ark not to be aware of this; but as we discussed last time, Nimrod was a man looked at as being more than the average human. He was not God, but as far as many of the people were concerned, Nimrod was something closer to being God than other people were! The word "Assur" exists, and in its rawest translation means "water boundary," not because a city setting on river banks was called that, but because of what people understood about creation. Again, far more awareness of what God was and had done existed in those days than many teachers give credit to. We see false gods the world over today because people have gotten further and further away for the truth they started with. The fact God has been giving us an ability to hold on to that truth, as the false practices and ideas of man attempt to push it away more and more, is why we have a written Word of God today, which did not exist until deep into human history!

Nimrod's people were aware of the creation story and the fact God made the earth as a void blank, which His Spirit moved upon while some form of unorganized water was referred to as simply, "...the face of the deep." Genesis 1:2 prevailed. They would also have been aware of how God began to organize this water and make this world's atmosphere. "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so." Genesis 1:6-7 Even today, after decades of being able to send things into outer space, we do not have a clear view of exactly what all is out there; and it is still generally acceptable to refer to God's dwelling as

simply, "The heavens." Nimrod set the standard for all later false gods, and was looked upon as, at the very least, a lesser god. Because of this, he was given a name to denote the idea. "Water boundary" is not a reference to the shores of a river or body of water on this earth; it is a way of referring to the place out there somewhere where the water firmament above touches all that which is beyond! Nimrod was not just given a name to denote the physical place. Nimrod was considered to be a being who lived, was going to live, or deserved to live in Assur. Thus, Assyria is a way of saying what Nimrod made the land he ruled. It is to say - a heavenly place. "Asshur," with an "h," is the title Nimrod was given to denote they believed he was a god!

By using this name, verse 11 is telling us that it was after Nimrod's lore grew to this point that he begins to move with the confidence that he has the right to make the decisions for all people. We talked in our last two segments about force, and it does not appear Nimrod needed to use much. However, once Nimrod was no longer Nimrod the man, but Asshur the god, there was certainly no hope for anyone to stand in his way, and this would set the precedent for later rulers. Nimrod would go out from the land of Shinar, where he already ruled, and begin to build what would be considered Assyria altogether. He would do this by building other places for his subjects to live in. He went out and built Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah and Resen. (see map on pg. 10) Resen is referred to as a "great city," which likely denotes not just its size but its accomplishments as well. What is interesting is this designation is not given to any of the others, even Babel. Because of their proximity to each other, it is possible that in later times Nineveh and Resen grew together as one city. When Jonah the prophet is sent to Nineveh centuries later, the Bible says Nineveh was a city which took three days to travel through. (Jonah 3:1-4) There was obviously considerable resources in this area, and the accomplishments of Resen very well may be why Nineveh became the capital of the next empire attempt, which was the Assyrian Empire. Now all of these cities Nimrod built were considerably further north than the cities he already ruled, and this shows that Nimrod had a strategic mind. These cities would solidify Nimrod's control of the entire Mesopotamian valley! Almost like a hen gathers her chicks into the nest, Nimrod was not just building cities, but a way of life for all the people of the world!

Until next time, Shalom!

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