

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

We ended last time by talking about the fact that after the flood, man lost a second opportunity at a Garden of Eden like place where all men could have felt free to come and meet directly with God. They did so by using their cooperation to build a tower with exactly the opposite intent. Instead of ensuring the things of God would never be lost on this earth, they desired to ensure the very flawed ideas of men, which led to the flood in the first place, would be held in the highest regard by all people. This led to a discussion about how God taking away the fact we were all of one language and even one speech was something very valuable. However, it had to be done because we were using it for sin instead of the great things we could have used it for! All this shows us just how much we lose when we insist on focusing on the ideas of men, instead of accepting and living by the ways of God in our life and the design of any communities we may build.

In the course of covering this information, we have been jumping around a bit through the chronology of the events, in order to set the stage; but now we want to take a look at how it all unfolded step by step. The verses we covered last time tell us how after Noah and his family left the ark, they journeyed to a plain in Shinar. This likely happened even before the story where we are told of Ham doing wrong to his father Noah. (Gen. 9:20-27) As I pointed out last issue, Peleg was born right around one hundred years after Noah left the ark, and is named for the fact the confounding of the languages happened around the time of his birth. In the story where Noah is mocked by his son Ham, we see Noah had planted a vineyard, and began to reap a harvest from that vineyard. This tells us a couple of things. This story did not happen in the rugged terrain where the ark landed. By the time of this story, Noah and his family had already found a place more suitable for cultivation activities than the mountains of Ararat, where they would have faced rocky soil and harsh weather conditions. The second thing is that wherever this was, Noah and his family stayed for a considerable time. Vine-

yards cannot be planted and harvested overnight. The seed Noah used to plant his vineyard likely came with him on the ark, but grapevines take time to get from seed to producing plants. It is just not a plausible thought that when Genesis chapter 11 verse 2 tells us they journeyed east, referring to a direction from where the ark landed, and “...found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there.” that the bulk of this journey took place after Noah had already stayed in the place where the ark landed, or a secondary spot outside of the valley, long enough to plant and see produce from a vineyard.

Noah and his family traveled out of the mountains and settled in the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Somewhere in that area is where Noah, both literally and figuratively, puts down roots. As time passes, children are born to his sons, and the incident with Ham takes place. Chapter 10 gives us a picture of the genealogy and where in it the language division comes. It attempts to give us a view of the setting for the tower story as well as what immediately follows. Thus, it tells us that the families of Noah's sons grew and built settlements or cities in and along this valley. There even arose a man revered as a great leader (Nimrod), who specifically begins to organize the lives of the people into the same kind of ideas which were in the mind of Adam and Eve's son Cain when he went out from the presence of God and built a city. (Gen. 4:16-17) The placement of these cities began to show man that, at least for the purpose of agriculture and the gathering of natural resources, the families were going to be spread out over a distance that would only grow greater as time moved forward. This precipitates the statement we see in chapter 11 verse 3 that begins with the words, “And they said one to another...”

This statement was not a statement made by a people already living in one large city, as one large group. This statement is made in a very democratic way. There was this growing concern, which is confirmed in the latter part of



verse 4, that humans would become disconnected across the planet. They had already chosen to make a central leader who could, at the very least, facilitate their interaction, even plan and guide their lives. However, the question became, what was going to happen when distance caused central leadership to become impractical, at least on a regular basis, or maybe just downright impossible? The fact this has/does greatly concern many people, even to this very day, is a big reason why man has attempted empire after empire, and even made attempts in more recent times to take a more democratic approach and simply try to connect the various governments of the world through one body or organization. At the time of chapter 11, those concerned with this idea did not have to conquer others to build an empire or one world anything. The population of the planet was not as yet too far separated by space or relationship that connecting each other through one central idea and location could not be easily accomplished. However, it seems clear they felt they needed to act without hesitation or the opportunity would be lost. What they came up with - in many ways - shows us what is old often becomes "new" again!

Whatever heads of tribes and/or cities that may have existed, along with their top ruler Nimrod, had to find a solution which would keep the people connected. Because not all people would necessarily want to stay connected, and certainly not in the way and with the intent rulers often desire, they had to find a solution that would cause people to want or feel obligated to stay connected! It is important that we understand, they did not want to rely on the idea people would always stay connected to some degree through person to person interaction, which would have been much better than anything we could anticipate in today's world, because everyone spoke the same language and had the same speech. As we talked about last time, this means even when people were far removed for long periods of time, they would not have lost the ability to communicate due to linguistic changes in their speech. However, this advantage was not enough for those who desired to keep the people connected. It was too much about the individual and not enough about the whole. We need to grasp the fact that the idea of building a tower was not just about a structure for rulership, or a place to come and share ideas. They wanted something that would keep the people together and connected in a way which would maintain the flow and order, the people who believed they were causing human progress wanted.

To accomplish this, the tower would need to have a draw far greater than just the offering of a central point of leadership, and the way to get that draw was to play off the false concept already in existence about Nimrod. That concept was, somehow a certain man or men could be greater than the average person. They decided to take that concept and expand it. They would also come up with ways to make it more accessible to the common person. Accessible in that people could come and reap the benefits of being connected to such tangible godlike power, and, also, one could possibly learn how to achieve such status for one's self. This birthed the first

truly widespread practice of organized false religion, and no matter how much those who put it in place bought into the idea themselves or not, the outcome would be the displacement of the truth in the hearts of men that there is only One True God!

As we look at verses 3 and 4, we find their determination was that just a great city was not going to do the trick. They needed a central structure, and in their mind's that structure should not be anything remotely temporary in nature. This is why it is specifically pointed out they were going to make it out of brick, and this should be contrasted in our minds, with the fact, the first tabernacle or temple God called to be built unto His Name was, in fact, a very mobile tent. It would be years into Israel's history before any permanent structure in a permanent location was built to replace it. When you are The True God of the universe, being with the people who are called by Your Name was/is more important than having a man-made structure that will last through the ages. (Heb. 8-9, I Cor. 6:15-20) When you are not a true god, such as Nimrod, you have to play the system and impress people, even if the accomplishment takes their hard work and effort to get done!

The fact they were going to use bricks also speaks to the idea they wanted something that would not inhibit their progress. If you quarry stone, you will have to find a good source; and if you are not close to that source, you will have to find a way to transport the stone. Building a large structure takes enough labor and time in the first place. Increasing the process by adding to it the difficulty of obtaining materials was not a productive plan. Many later structures directly related to this first scheme - such as the pyramids in Egypt - are made of stone. However, this is because there was an abundance of labor, which rulers such as a Pharaoh could exploit at will, even without care for loss of life. Pharaohs were also oftentimes making a monument and burial place for themselves, which they wanted to last for as long as possible. They could spend, and often did spend, their entire ruling years getting them built!

Nimrod did not have this luxury. Sure, the people believed he was somewhere above them and godlike, but this was the beginning of such determinations, not something commonly accepted for generations! Nimrod had to work politically or he would lose the support of the people. They would not use stone quarried out of a mountain miles away, which would take a great deal of time and even see significant loss of life. Only slaves would do such work. The people of Nimrod's kingdom would use brick, and simply attempt to make them of the highest standard. The materials to make brick were readily available in the valley, and so was the materials needed to make mortar to hold them together. The use of brick would be very long lasting and give them flexibility as they built a structure unlike anyone had ever attempted before. Brick would also ensure a fast construction process, with visible accomplishment that would quickly convince everyone this was not a fool's errand or tyrannical government scheme. On top of all this, brick making was not

A Matter Of Life And Death

Part III

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"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."

In our last segment, we began the discussion about how we were specifically created, and how that directly relates to the fact death is a problem for us. We are made in the image of God, Who is Triune, which is something Jesus helped us understand better by using family relationship illustrations we should all understand. These illustrations not only show how God functions, but also how we should function because we are made in the image of God, and thus also consist of three parts. Our mind is reflective of God The Father and our body is the reflection of The Son. This means our body should be subject to our mind. Discussing the function of our spirit is where we begin this segment of "A Matter Of Life And Death."

Our spirit is much the same in relationship to the mind. It too is intended to be under the command of the mind, and it too has instincts and capabilities. The fact we are not as clear on these instincts and capabilities as we are the fleshly side of us is, again, a big part of why Jesus prayed The Father send us The Holy Ghost after He exited this physical world. In spite of this, people still believe very wrong things about our spirit. The biggest false teaching, which can and does cause significant trouble in our understanding of a question such as we have here, is some people will tell you our spirit is dead until the time we accept salvation. People get away with teaching this, mostly without question, because the spirit, unlike the flesh, is not made from temporal pieces. This means it will not die just because it does not get what it instinctively asks for, and this means people get away with ignoring the spirit entirely. As long as they have what they want in the flesh, people usually do not see the harm in allowing the spirit to languish, but we need to understand - it is never dead!

We may not be entirely able to define the spirit, its desires, capabilities, and instincts; but just as with the flesh, there would be more than simple impairment to our lives if our spirit was truly dead! So, where do we come up with the thought the spirit is dead? Well, in Genesis 2:17 God told Adam the consequences of eating of the tree He told them not to, and many people believe those consequences were: if they ate they would die immediately! Because it's easy to see Adam and Eve did not physically die upon taking the fruit, many people expand upon this wrong thought by attempting to determine what must have happened. What they come up with is the idea Adam's and Eve's spirits are

what died. They then expand this bad thought into saying we are all born in spiritual death, and that is why we need salvation. All this is a far bigger misunderstanding and mistranslation of what God said, than we see in Eve telling the serpent God said they could not even "touch" the tree, or they would die! (Gen. 3:3)

We need to look at what God actually said. God tells them of all the trees they may freely eat, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17 God said, "in the day" they would "surely die." This is not the hard, "You will die!" statement we are often taught is there. So, what does God mean? Well, the tree in question is a tree that gives the knowledge of what is good, and what is evil. This is something man was not created with. God did not want us to have it for the exact reasons we see after Adam and Eve took of it. We are told, immediately they had understanding they did not have before. Because of this, they realized they had responsibilities which they did not have before. The first thing they realized was they needed an ability to cover their physical nakedness. This, because they had a responsibility to others not to be a stumbling block, and they understood physical temptation in a way people today try to ignore for the most part.

The story shows us Adam and Eve failed to do this one simple task even to their own satisfaction, and when God came to them they hid for that specific reason. (Gen. 3:6-11) God did not want us to bear the burden of being responsible for the whole knowledge of good and evil, for this very reason. He wanted to bring us up in the ways we should go, much like a parent should train a child. (Prov. 22:6) What made it wrong to take of the tree was, first and most simplistically, God had told us not to; but even in telling us not to, He explained it was because there were consequences we could not bear. Those consequences were not that we would die; and if it did not strike you just then, let me point out: one should stop to consider that the statement I just made sounds a lot like what Satan said to Eve. The truth is, the devil did not really lie to Eve; he simply played on her ego, by leading her down a thought pattern of mistrust toward God. The devil told Eve, God did not want man to take of the tree because man's eyes would be opened and they would know things like God knows things. (Gen. 3:4-5) This is nothing but the flat-out truth! God did not want us to know what He knows, but it was not because He was trying to hold us back, nor was it because having the knowledge would kill us like a poison. It was because the consequences of knowing and being responsible for such knowledge would be that we

surely would not even make it through one day - much less eternity - without doing something worthy of the judgment of death. As we look at the story, we see that is precisely what happened!

With this understanding, one should see clearly, by reading through the story, it was not our spirit that died, it was still the flesh that would pay the price. No, it did not die right then and there, but it was for this reason God had to - yes had to - separate man from the other tree, which also gave something we were not created with. That something is a fact we have been talking about since the beginning of this writing. Physical things die, and even man was not immortal on a physical level. Because our bodies are made from dust, they are temporal in the same way plant and animal bodies are temporal. What gave man the chance to be different was the Tree of Life!

Now, keep in mind, man obviously did not have to eat from the Tree of Life once a day, or even every year, in order to survive. Today, we live for several decades without the Tree of Life, and before the flood of Noah's day, where it was God's determination our years would need to be capped at 120, people lived hundreds of years without the Tree of Life! The Garden of Eden, where the Tree of Life existed, was made not just for Adam and Eve to live in forever, but for a place where man could come and directly commune with God. No matter where or how far he roamed, man would always have returned to the garden, if for no other reason, to eat from the Tree of Life. When they did, God would be there, just as He was even after Adam and Eve disobeyed.

The fact this was the point in creating a specific garden, and the fact God put the Tree of Life there, is mirrored in the stories we find throughout the Bible. God created a nation of people where He would place His name, and it would be through those people and to that specific place where He set His name that The Messiah would come. There Jesus would sacrifice His life, which would provide the opportunity of eternal life for us, once again. Why? Because God wants us to commune with Him. He does not force Himself upon us, but He does make Himself available to us. He also makes it clear that only in communing with Him is there life everlasting, because only in serving the purpose we were created to serve is there a reason to exist at all! (Rom. 6:8-23)

This truth is why, even after taking of the tree God told them not to, Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening. God did not want to separate us from Him, but because God is Holy, sin brings separation; and what really caused us to be driven from the garden was the fact the Tree of Life was there. (Gen. 3:22-24) God specifically says man would reach out with his physical hand and take of the fruit. Because of the Tree of Life, man had a physical way to choose for himself to live indefinitely, whether he cared to know God or not. Because this world is temporal, God did not have to strike us down

immediately; but God could not allow the destruction our sin would bring to go on for eternity, especially in a place where God had also given us the ability to make the choice of how many other humans there would be in this universe. We would sin and be affected by the sins of others. All this is why God did not wish for man to have the knowledge of good and evil in the first place.

Sin is just downright destructive all the way around. Not only is it a difficult responsibility to know what is good and do it with the perfection necessary not to be guilty of the punishment of death, the knowledge brings a propensity for self-reliance, which is counter productive to learning how to handle the responsibility the knowledge brings. This is why Adam and Eve hid from God instead of running to Him. They were naked, and they wanted to do something about that before they came to God. While this may make sense to many of us, we need to stop and realize that's only because we are affected by the same problem! This is why God points out that Adam's excuse for hiding was not a real excuse. Adam and Eve had been in the presence of God day after day from the day they were created, and it had never been a problem before. It was only a problem now because their mindset had been changed. (Gen. 3:11)

In this new state of having the knowledge of good and evil, it would truly be up to each man, woman, and child to make their own choice: do you want to learn what righteousness truly demands and how to perform those demands, or do you want to simply live life as you see fit? On top of this is the truth that it's not a onetime decision, it is one that needs to be made every day, in every situation. Now, it would be great if everyone would go wholly unto God for the answers; but even then, without the innocence necessary for God to constantly constrain us, we would still cause much destruction and sorrow as the learning process went forward. We see this simple truth by looking at what happens even among a group of believers today. No matter how hard any of us are trying, we all make mistakes that cause harm. Couple that with the fact there are people in this world who use their free will to reject God's guidance altogether, and you can see the overall problem!

Everyone's lives are intertwined with everyone else, and desiring God's direction in your personal life does not exclude you from this truth. Those who desire God's ways will consist of an entire spectrum of people at different points in the learning process. Those who do not want God's guidance will range from fairly good people who, at the very least, are trying to do what they think is right, all the way to those who could not care less. In looking at this point, we should be able to see there are limiting factors to what God can even do for and with those who do want a world the way God would have it. God gave man a free will; if He simply took that away from us, it would destroy the reason He created us. Thus, the plan from the very beginning was that even if sin entered the picture, man would be allowed his free will. The difference would be that man's time would be limited.

In our last segment, we continued our overview of the book of Genesis, where we ended with the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel and receiving the blessing of a new name. This would be much like the name change his grandfather Abraham received. (Gen. 17:1-8) However, unlike Abraham's name change, Jacob's new name of Israel appears a bit interchangeably with the name Jacob, going forward. This is because the name Jacob continues to be used when talking about the person as the individual he was. On the other hand, the name Israel is the name used to denote the entire group of people and possessions, which by then comprised what would continue to grow and become the nation God had desired to bring through Abraham. It also gets used for Jacob personally when he is working or being referred to as the patriarch of the nation.

As we enter chapter 33 of Genesis, we see Jacob reuniting with his family, which he had already sent over the ford Jabbok. From there, the family would go forward together following the various groups of possessions that had been sent out ahead of them. Jacob knew Esau was coming to meet him, but whether it was for Jacob's hurt or not was not known. Jacob had hoped if Esau was angry and destroyed those things he had sent on ahead, the groups behind would have a chance to hear the news and escape. No news of such an occurrence comes to them; but as Jacob prepares to go forward with his wives and children, the moment of truth arrives! Jacob looks up and sees Esau with his four hundred men coming. Thus, Jacob does a mini version of what he had already done with the rest of his possessions. Jacob puts each wife with the children they had borne, into groups. Jacob sets Zilpah and Bilhah, with their respective children, out in front. Then Leah with her children, and in the rear, Rachel with Joseph. Jacob would then go out in front of them all in order to meet his brother face to face for the first time since the incident that caused Esau to vow he would kill Jacob some twenty years before. In the end, Jacob receives the best reception he could have hoped for as he and his brother embrace, and the reunion brings both of them to tears. Esau then asks Jacob who the people are coming up behind him; and as each group approaches, Jacob introduces the family God had blessed him with. Esau would also ask about those animals that Jacob had sent out before them as a peace offering for Esau. When Jacob explains they are a gift, Esau tells Jacob he does not need them. However, Jacob insists that he take them, and eventually Esau accepts.

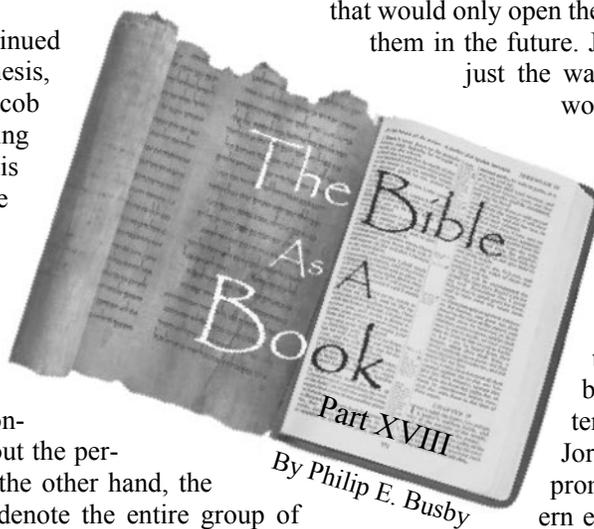
Esau offers to escort Jacob on his journey home, but Jacob says he does not want to overtax the cattle and children by going at the pace Esau and his men could travel. Esau offers to leave a certain amount of the men that were with him to help and protect Jacob, but Jacob does not want any entanglements

that would only open the possibility of further trouble between them in the future. Jacob convinces Esau things are good just the way they are. Jacob also tells Esau he would see him in Seir, which is the place

Esau had begun building a household of his own, separate from their father Isaac's house. In leaving the land years earlier, Jacob had taken the typical path to Mesopotamia, traveling north out of the area between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. However, in coming back, it would seem it was Jacob's intent to travel along the east side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and enter the promised land by going around the southern end of the Dead Sea. The land of Seir Esau lived was in this rugged terrain, which lay between the south end of the Dead Sea and the northern tip of the Red Sea branch that comes up the east side of the Sinai Peninsula. It would seem Jacob had always intended to travel straight to his brother before he entered into the land that God had promised Abraham; and thus, he tells Esau he would see him later in what was fast becoming Esau's territory.

Esau would return to Seir; but likely because he had such a favorable meeting with his brother, Jacob would not continue traveling south, but settle down for a time to rest his cattle. Jacob would stay on the east side of Jordan, pretty much in the same area where he wrestled with the angel; and because of Jacob's building of booths or stalls for his cattle, this place would be called "Succoth." There Jacob would also build what might be called a settlement for his household. It would be from here Jacob would once again enter the promised land. With his family, he would cross the Jordan, likely leaving his herds and the bulk of his possessions in Succoth for at least a time, and pitch a tent in an area almost directly west of there named Shechem. In this area, Jacob would even buy a piece of land held by the inhabitants of that place. This would put Israel considerably north of the area where his father and grandfather had primarily roamed, and where God had met him as he left for Mesopotamia. However, Jacob would build here an altar calling it "God, The God Of Israel."

In this place, among these people, Jacob's daughter Dinah would be physically violated by a member of the area's ruling family. This man would truly love and desire to have Dinah for a wife, and even ask his father to use the family influence to secure her for him. His father would go to do exactly that, encouraging Jacob's family that they should agree to become one people through intermarriages. He would also tell them to name their price for Dinah's dowry. Jacob's sons told him it could only be done if his people agreed to be like them and circumcise all their males. Because the people desired to absorb such a prosperous family into their community, this was agreed to, and all the men of that area who came regularly in and out of the city were circumcised. However, after three days, when the soreness of the procedure would have been at



its worse, Simeon and Levi, both sons of Leah and full brothers of Dinah, attacked and killed the men of that place. Jacob's sons went on to take as spoil, all their possessions, their wives and their children. In the end of this, Jacob would be concerned that their actions had brought a bad reputation upon the family among those who lived in the land. He was also concerned the other Canaanites of the area would gather together and destroy them all! However, the two sons who had carried out the initial attack were those who had the traditional right to avenge their sister in such a case, and they felt what they had done was reasonable.

After this, God instructs Israel to pack up his things and move on to Bethel, which is the place God had met with Jacob as he was leaving for Laban's house. Israel realizes this was a move of spiritual renewal for his family and in their service to God, for it would finally bring them back into that specific area that God clearly intended Israel to consider home. Thus, Israel tells his entire household, before they go to Bethel, they need to clean up those things that are not proper before God, such as the false gods and religious ornaments they had picked up over the years. Jacob takes all this paraphernalia and hides it under an oak there in Shechem before they leave. As they take their journey south, God would put fear of them in the hearts of the surrounding Canaanite tribes, and not a one of them would pursue Israel. When Israel arrives at Bethel, he builds an altar; and in contrast to the altar in Shechem, which he calls the altar of The God of Israel, he calls this one, "God, The House of God!" God would appear to Jacob once again in this place and reaffirm He had changed Jacob's name to Israel. God would also confirm that unto Jacob was the covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, passed, along with the land! Israel would, once again, set up and dedicate a pillar of stone in Bethel, to mark and be a reminder of this event.

From here, Israel would continue his journey along the same path his grandfather had journeyed in the land. Along the way, Rachel would be about to give birth to her second son. The birth would take place about a mile outside the city of Bethlehem, that same city where The Messiah would centuries later be born! Rachel would have a difficult birth, one which she would not survive. As she died, she named her son Benoni, meaning "son of my sorrow"; but Jacob would rename him Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand." This name would be a prophesy for this son's tribe, as centuries later when the children of Israel separated into two nations, the tribe of Benjamin would be the only tribe to stay with the tribe of Judah under the authority of the house of King David, literally making Benjamin the right-hand tribe to the tribe through which The Messiah would be born!

Jacob would bury his well favored wife there outside of Bethlehem, and set up a pillar to mark the spot which is believed to be known, even to this day. Israel did not have a perfect family, as we see in Reuben's indiscretion with Bilhah; but Israel now had all twelve of the sons who would become the later tribes comprising the promised nation. With them, Israel would continue on his southern journey until he finally returned home to his father in Hebron. This would reunite Jacob with the household he had been blessed by his father to

inherit about thirty years prior to this point in time. Isaac would go on to live to be 180 years old before he gave up the ghost. This means he lived to see many of the later events of Israel's life, and died only about a decade before Israel moved to Egypt. Upon Isaac's death, Jacob and Esau would come together to bury their father. Esau would show he had truly put the past behind him as he makes no attempt to harm Jacob, even after their father's death; and because the possessions of both Esau and Jacob were so great, the two agreed to be separated from one another. Thus, in that land south of the Dead Sea, Esau would go on to build a nation of his own, with kings at its helm, long before Israel had one, and this nation would be known as the Edomites. Jacob would go on to truly be the one in charge of the house of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, remaining there in Hebron and the area his father and grandfather had sojourned in.

The family of Israel was now settled down, but as the keepers of flocks and herds in great abundance, their business took them far and wide. As is tradition, and seen in the family of Laban, it is often the labor of the sons to take care of the herds and be in charge of the other herdsmen employed with the family. Israel was no exception. However, Jacob greatly loved Joseph the eldest son of Rachel, and favored Joseph over all his other sons. This was true even over Benjamin. Because he favors Joseph, Jacob makes a special coat out of multiple colors for him. Of course, the fact Joseph was loved more by their father than they, was not lost on the older sons, and they hated Joseph for it. This was increased by the fact Joseph was very honest and moral, and this made him very much an agent of his father, bringing word to Israel of everything the other sons did while performing their tasks. All this culminates into even greater hatred of Joseph when he dreams two distinct dreams which symbolize a time when all the others in his family will someday see him as highly honored and bow to him. However, his father considers the possibility that there might be something to these dreams, in spite of the fact he rebukes Joseph for them.

Sometime after this, the bulk of Jacob's sons are out tending to herds that were considerably north, and feeding in the area of Shechem where Israel had first stayed on the west side of Jordan after returning to the promised land. In course of time, Israel begins to wonder if all is well with his sons and the herds. Thus, he sends Joseph to check on them and bring him word again. Joseph, being seventeen years old or so, sets out from Hebron for the North Country. However, once in Shechem, Joseph can not find his brothers, and ends up finding a man who informs him they had chosen to go even further north to a place called Dothan. Joseph would find his brothers in Dothan. However, before he got to them, they would see him coming and consider this the perfect opportunity to get rid of him! They decided they would kill him and throw his body in a pit where no one was likely to find him, and certainly no one would know who he was if they did. However, Jacob's oldest son Reuben was not so cruel that he wanted to see Joseph killed. At the same time, he understood he was out numbered and could do little to stop his brothers, especially, without the possibility of them turning on him as well. Thus, Ruben talks them out of killing Joseph and changes the plan to

simply throwing him in a pit and leaving him there. Ruben's intent was to return after his brothers had gone and save Joseph out of the pit to return him to their father.

When Joseph gets to them, they put the plan into action, stripping him of his special coat and throwing him in a pit. Content that they had accomplished what they wanted, they go off to eat. Reuben apparently finishes and goes off to work again or simply does not stay directly with them, and in his absence, the brothers see a caravan of merchants coming from the north headed south. These merchants are actually of the family of Abraham's son Ishmael; and as they come, Judah puts forth the idea that instead of leaving Joseph in the pit to die, they might as well be blameless of his blood altogether by selling him into slavery. The brothers there with him agree this is an even better plan yet. As the merchants pass by, the brothers get Joseph out of the pit and sell him for twenty pieces of silver. Ruben, not knowing what they had done, later returns to the pit to retrieve Joseph; but, of course, Joseph is not there! This causes Reuben to return to his brothers and admit he was concerned about Joseph. Now that he does not know where Joseph is, Reuben is distressed to the point he simply does not know what he is going to do! This seems to bring the brothers to the realization that they had not considered what they were going to tell their father. They needed a story they could all hold to. For this, they decide they will take Joseph's special coat, cover it with animal blood and return it to their father as proof Joseph was killed by some wild animal! The scheme works. Jacob is convinced his son has been killed and begins to grieve for him. The family tries to comfort him, but Jacob tells them he will grieve for Joseph until it kills him!

After this, we see the beginning of Israel's sons starting families of their own. In Judah, we see not necessarily a preferable marriage, but one that did not reject him from the promised nation's lineage as it had Esau. Judah would take a Canaanite woman, and she would bear him three sons. This shows us that by this time the genetic marker necessary to bring about a distinct people was set, and there was no longer a pressing need to see wives exclusively coming out of the gene pool of the Mesopotamian area from which Abraham had come. As Judah's sons grow up, Judah would take a wife for his eldest son Er. This wife's name was Tamar. However, Er was such a wicked man, God did reject him from being part of the founding fathers of the chosen nation, and God slew him. Now it is the tradition of ancient times, and even later a part of the Law of Moses, that a man is to take his brother's wife if he dies without leaving an heir, in order to produce an heir for him. (Deut. 25:5-10) This is done so death does not affect so much the natural growth of the family, and the inheritance of possessions such as land and herds would be clear cut. This was especially important when building a nation. Acting upon this tradition, Judah sends his next eldest son Onan to take Tamar and raise up a child to be Er's heir. However, Onan decides for reasons such as: he did not want Tamar to bear his true first born, or he just did not in general desire to have a child who would be considered his brother's and not his, he will not go all the way with her. Onan fulfills tradition by taking Tamar. Onan even physically joins himself to her, but he denies her the elements necessary to conceive. This dishon-

est and selfish act brings God's wrath down on Onan, and he is slain as well.

This leaves Judah with only one remaining son named Shelah, who is not yet old enough to take Tamar to be his wife. Thus, Judah sends Tamar back to her father's house to live as a widow until Shelah had time to mature. As the necessary years pass, Judah neglects and/or forgets his promise to Tamar and never sends Shelah to take her. In course of time, Judah's wife dies. After Judah mourns his wife, he returns to work by going up with his close friend Hirah - who was somewhat responsible for Judah meeting his wife years earlier - to see how the shearing of the sheep was coming along. Tamar learns about this; disguises herself as a prostitute; and puts herself in Judah's path. Her scheme works, and Judah desires to be with her. However, Tamar wants assurances she can prove any resulting child is Judah's, and that she has not just been playing the Harlot. Thus, as they negotiate the price for her "services" to be that Judah would send her a baby goat from the flocks, Tamar will only agree to it if he will leave something personal with her until the animal is brought. For this, Tamar gets to hold on to Judah's staff, which has his signet attached to it with a bracelet of some kind. Later, she does not trade these items in for the promised animal, and the workman sent with the animal had to return and report to Judah that he could not find, nor did anyone seem to know about a harlot in that area. Instead, Tamar would use the items to prove it was her encounter with Judah that did in fact conceive the twin boys she would give birth to, one of which is the line through which King David, and thus, The Messiah was born!

As all this was going on in the promised land, Joseph had been brought to Egypt where he was sold to an officer of the government named Potiphar. God had directed all this, and would continue to direct Joseph's path in order to set the stage for Egypt to be the nation Israel would draw from as it grew into a nation itself. As Joseph was in his new master's house, God blessed him with wisdom and prospered everything he did. Because of this, Potiphar eventually gave so much of his domestic matters into Joseph's hands that Potiphar did not even bother to know what he had in total. All he cared about was coming home to a nice house and good food! This continued until Potiphar's wife decided she wanted Joseph in a physical way. Joseph, being a righteous man, refused, and made it clear he would never violate his master's trust in doing anything of the kind! However, this did nothing to stop Potiphar's wife from continually asking Joseph, until one day she got an opportunity to push the matter. On this day, Joseph came into the house at a time when there were no other men of the house around, and Potiphar's wife literally grabbed Joseph. Joseph wrest his way free of her, but she was able to retain his outer robe. She decided to use this opportunity to hurt Joseph, and she accused him of being the one who had tried to force her. When she told her husband and showed him Joseph's coat, which she claimed he had left behind in his haste to flee after she cried out for help, Potiphar had Joseph thrown in prison.

In prison, Joseph once again was blessed by God, and the keeper of the prison did the same thing Potiphar had done. He gave everything that happened there into Joseph's hands to the

point the keeper did not even worry about checking up on Joseph because he knew Joseph was doing a great job. As Joseph was there, two of Pharaoh's servants were cast into the prison because they had displeased Pharaoh. One was the head butler and the other the head baker. One night, both these men had a dream which disturbed them; and when Joseph saw they were sad, he asked them of the matter. They both told Joseph the dreams they had, and Joseph told them the interpretation. The head butler's dream was that in three days he would be restored unto his post. However, the head baker would not. In three days Pharaoh would have him executed. Three days later was Pharaoh's birthday, and on that day Pharaoh gave orders concerning the two men, which brought about exactly what Joseph had said would happen. What did not come about was that Joseph had asked the butler to remember him when he returned to serving Pharaoh, in the hopes that Pharaoh might hear Joseph's case. However, the butler did not remember or say a word about Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams, which none of his servants could interpret. At this time, the head butler remembered how he had forgotten Joseph and begins to explain to Pharaoh how he and the head baker had met a man in prison who could interpret dreams. He explained he knew this because both the dream of he and the baker were correctly interpreted by Joseph. Pharaoh sends for Joseph, who is cleaned up and brought into Pharaoh. Pharaoh tells Joseph his dreams, and Joseph tells him they are one dream given twice to emphasize the thing is of God, and was coming very soon. They were a warning that coming upon the land was seven years of great harvest, but those years would be eaten up by the following seven years of horrible famine. Joseph tells Pharaoh he must seek out a man who can orchestrate the storing of food during the seven years of plenty in order to survive the following seven. In spite of heavy idolatry in Egypt, there is at this time still an understanding that there is One True God over all the universe. Pharaoh recognizes, no one he knows has God in their life more so than Joseph. Therefore, Joseph is not only chosen to carry out the food storage plan, but Pharaoh makes him the second ruler in Egypt. Only Pharaoh himself would be higher!

Joseph was thirty years old when this all took place, and about that same time Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian wife. This wife would bear Joseph two sons whose descendants would later become two half tribes among the children of Israel, and take the place of there being a tribe of Joseph. The oldest, Joseph would name Manasseh, because he said God had caused him to leave behind all his toil and his father's house. The second, he called Ephraim, because God had made him fruitful in the land he had been sold as a slave into. However, just as Joseph would no longer be a slave in Egypt, he also would not forever be separated from his father Israel. The famine would reach into the land of Canaan, and Israel's family there would need food. Israel had heard there was food in Egypt, and sent his ten oldest sons to buy some. However, he kept Benjamin at home for safe keeping because he was the only remaining son of Rachel, at least as far as Jacob knew.

This would bring Joseph's ten brothers face to face with Joseph in Egypt. However, Joseph would take measures to keep them from recognizing him, even speaking to them only through an interpreter. Joseph wanted to see what had changed and what had not over the years of separation. For this, Joseph accused his brothers of being spies. This his ten brothers denied, and in an attempt to convince Joseph, they told of their father, revealed it was their story that Joseph was dead, and told how they had one remaining brother at home. Joseph tells them they will have to prove who they are and that their story is true, by bringing this one last brother to him. At first, Joseph says they will have to send one person home to get Benjamin; but after detaining all of them for three days, Joseph tells them because he fears God, they can all go, except one. Among themselves, the brothers discuss their belief that all this has come upon them because of what they had done to Joseph, and in that point they were right. However, they did not know in what way they were right. Their selling of Joseph into Egypt had led Joseph all the way to second in command in that country, and now there they were bowing to Joseph just like his earlier dreams had prophesied. As ironic as that was, there was another fact Joseph's brothers did not know at this time - Joseph could understand their entire conversation!

Joseph makes it appear to them that he is harshly detaining Simeon in Egypt, by binding him before their eyes. Then he sends the rest of his brothers home to retrieve their brother Benjamin. Joseph sends them away with their sacks full of food, and extra provisions for the journey home. Then as a test of their honesty, which Joseph also hoped would compel them even more to make the return trip, Joseph commands his steward to put the money they had used to purchase the food, inside the top of each brother's sack. As the brothers take their journey home, no doubt considering all that had just happened to them, they stop along the way to stay at an inn. Here one of the brothers opens his sack of food to give some to his pack animal, and finds the money he had taken to pay for the food, inside the sack's mouth. He tells his brothers, and they are all terrified at the trouble this could bring to them. Back at home, they convey all these events to their father Israel; and as they unload the food, they find each one of them has brought the money they took to pay for the food, home in their sacks. Israel is just astonished at what a mess they have made of the simple task of going to buy food! He is also very grieved, because he felt he had already lost Joseph, now with all this, there was little reason to believe Simeon had not been lost as well. To top it all off, the only way to attempt to rectify the situation was to send them again to Egypt and allow them to take their brother Benjamin, whom he did not send in the first place because of possible calamity. Ruben offers his two sons' lives as ransom for Benjamin if he did not return Benjamin safely; but Jacob refuses to send Benjamin on the grounds that if anything was to happen to Benjamin, the life which would be lost due to it, would be Jacob's!

Let's stay in God's Word!

A Matter Of Life And Death continued from pg. 4

These are the reasons why God had to bring the judgment of death upon sin, which is why He had to separate man from the Tree of Life the very day they took of the tree He told them not to take of. Even in sin, the tree could still cause man to live forever. In a sin-filled world, that is not a good thing for anyone!

Now, before we walk on from this fact, I feel, even after all we have discussed, there is a need to look specifically at the argument some would make that man's physical form did not need this tree, before man's fall into sin, in order to live forever. For this, I will pose some fairly simple questions. If it were true, we could have lived forever without the Tree of Life before our fall into sin, the question becomes, why did God put it in the garden at all? If God had to separate us from it the minute we did the one thing we were told would bring the judgment of death, it was certainly more than an object lesson, and it certainly was not put there for us to overcome death after losing immortality by sinning. If we had immortality to begin with, how else would we have lost that immortality and then needed the Tree of Life to sustain us?

Now, some might argue, according to what John saw in Revelation, the Tree of Life is seen in heaven, which would pose the same question. However, it does not, because of the very things we have been discussing. God created us to live a certain way. We know these facts by studying our Bible. We will have eternal bodies in heaven, which do not need the Tree of Life to sustain; but just as calling God, The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even heaven is designed to be a place we will understand in much the same way we understand what is here! God will use images that comfort us, and this is due to the fact our mind and spirit will be the same mind and spirit we have here, in spite of the fact we will have new bodies. Just as God repeated the pattern He created us with by creating a place to put His name on this earth and send His Son to, there will be, in heaven, a repeat of all the things we as humans, even from different time periods, were familiar with as it relates to the true things of God. (Rev. 21:1-5)

Getting back to the discussion of the fact it was not our spirit that died when Adam and Eve took of the fruit, and a point that takes us more directly to answering our question, we will turn now and look at the story which gave us the very popular Christian term, "born again." When people hear this term they often think about it in the context of the idea we are spiritually dead. Then they believe when we accept Jesus into our hearts, we are spiritually "born again." They extrapolate this concept from a conversation Jesus had with a leader of the Jewish nation, named Nicodemus, and many believe Nicodemus was confused by what Jesus said. It's true, today, we do have the same problem Nicodemus had, which is the simple fact Nicodemus was flabbergasted by the information. However, the real problem is that we don't simply marvel as Nicodemus did, and which Jesus told

him not to. Because we are the ones who get confused, we try to explain away the information by talking about spiritual death again!

In John chapter 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and admitted the Jewish leadership clearly knew Jesus was, at the very least, a teacher from God. Nicodemus came to Jesus because he wanted information from Jesus. Jesus knew what was burning in Nicodemus' mind, and He went right to it. Jesus tells Nicodemus the only way for a man to see the Kingdom of God is to be "born again." Now, many people think Nicodemus was confused about what Jesus was saying, and that is why he asked how a person can go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time? The truth is, Nicodemus was not confused. Jesus was answering the question Nicodemus wanted to know the answer to, and Nicodemus was right there in step with what Jesus was talking about. Because people believe in spiritual death, they believe Nicodemus was confused, and they often believe Jesus' answer confirms it. In doing this, we get all turned around and become the ones confused much the same way we believe Nicodemus was.

People believe Nicodemus was confused in that he was thinking physical when Jesus was talking spiritual, but this is untrue! Once again, what we are up against in many ways is the weakness of language. Jesus was talking about the physical, just as Nicodemus was talking about the physical. Nicodemus knew people died, even people who were believers in God. He did not understand how anyone could be saved from the judgment of death that sin brings if God allowed all people, whether they served God or not, to simply die! In truth, what Nicodemus wanted to know was not to dissimilar to the very question we are dealing with here; but we should consider Nicodemus did not have the facts as yet, which we now have by seeing the work Jesus was to do.

Many people believe Jesus' answer to Nicodemus' question confirms Nicodemus was just not thinking spiritually as he should, because Jesus says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5 People interpret this as meaning we have to be born physically and then our spirit must be born as well. This is wrong! I often say we cannot understand the latter parts of the Bible if we do not study the first parts. In I Corinthians 15:23 Paul explains, Jesus is the Firstfruits. We understand all this better if we know the Jewish law and the feasts it contains, but even if we don't, it should still be fairly simple to grasp the basic point. Jesus is not the only fruit His work will accomplish, but He is, by necessity, the One Who had to accomplish the sequence; and thus, the first to be what He was talking about when He said you must be "born again." This is the base dynamic of salvation which Jesus came to demonstrate to us and accomplish for us. It is the core of what being a Christian is all about!

Jesus would be killed, and His dead body laid in a

tomb. If that was where the story ended, there would be no point in talking about it or Him anymore, but it does not end there! After the Sabbath had passed, women came to the tomb where Jesus' body was laid; and as they came, they wondered how they were going to get the stone rolled away so they could access the body of Jesus. What happens is a great example of God providing our needs, but not interfering in the unfolding of our lives by stepping in at every moment and correcting our path. It was a truth the stone was heavy. It was a truth the women, without help, would not likely get it moved, nor were the guards placed by the governing authority likely to let them in. However, it was also a truth they, as well as others, needed to see inside that tomb!

Thus, God sends an angel down, whose appearance scares the soldiers so badly they become as dead men. This angel proceeds to roll the stone out from in front of the opening of the tomb, and then he sets upon it! (Matt. 28:1-4) When the women get to the tomb, they see it is open; and according to Luke, the angels who greet them inside the tomb have a simple question for them: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Luke 24:5 You see, the angel did not roll the stone away for Jesus to get out. He was already gone! The angel rolled away the stone for the women to see that fact, and for others to see it as well. Thus, the women are instructed to go spread the news! (Matt. 28:5-7)

Now, only a handful actually see Jesus before the sun sets on that third day of the process, but Jesus had proven what He told Nicodemus was necessary in order to see the Kingdom of God was, in fact, possible! Jesus had went through the process Himself. He had died a physical death, if not by the same means, still in the same manner we all die; and His body had been put in the grave, just as all dead bodies must be disposed of in some manner. However, Jesus did not stay in the grave. He got up and walked away from that grave! He did not do this because of the will of man. Remember, man's will is why Jesus had been put to death in the first place, which is the ultimate example of the destruction sin brings. No, Jesus walked away from the grave because of the will of God! (Acts 10:37-42) This is why Jesus told Nicodemus not to marvel at the fact God can do such a thing. The fact overcoming physical death is no complication for God, and God proved this through the work of The Messiah, is the Gospel in a nutshell! If you don't believe it's possible, then why would you claim to be a follower of Jesus?

Again, we return to the simple fact, it's our flesh that dies, and so it's our flesh that needs to be born a second time. That is what Jesus was talking about! Jesus was saying, the first time you were born it was because of the will of man. God made one and only one human. His name

was Adam. Eve was not created as Adam was created, she was made by taking a piece of Adam and forming a bone of Adam's bone, and flesh of Adam's flesh, human. Adam was a man, and because Eve was physically his counterpart, Adam called her a woman. (Gen. 2:23) The fact God created both male and female is how new individuals have come into existence ever since. An already existing pair of humans gave a piece of themselves to form your physical life. However, this world is filled with sin and did not remain, from creation forward, what God wanted it to be. What you need in order to see that place where God's will is being accomplished, or what is simply called the Kingdom of God in John chapter 3, is for this flesh, which is part of you and which being made of the dust of this planet is part of what God created in Genesis 1:1, to die. Then, as an individual, you can be born again by the will of God, in a new body that is not part of this sin-filled, temporal universe!

In our next segment, we will talk more about what true salvation is, and the ways we should understand and use terminology such as "salvation" and "born again" more properly than we do. We will also begin the discussion of what truly happens to us after the death of our physical forms, by looking at the fact so many things people throughout time have believed do not line up with what the Bible teaches us. Thus, we cannot hold onto the theories of men if we want to understand the truth. 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 E. Busby.

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FBS continued from pg. 2

a very dangerous task, and one which is assembly line methodical. People, even outside of those who saw themselves as under Nimrod's rulership, would volunteer time and sweat to be involved in a process such as this, especially to achieve a great project they could all tell their children they took part in!

Verse 4 may seem like more of the emphasis that they intended to build something great, and those facts are certainly in the writing. They were going to build not just a city, but one with a great central monument! However, there is more than structural greatness intended here. This verse is where we see the idea that would take the place they intended to build beyond just a meeting and sharing hub. They would build a tower "...whose top may reach unto heaven..." and make a name for themselves. Both these factors are key to understanding what was truly going on. We often take the idea they wanted to make a name for themselves, as being the idea humanity wanted to make a name for themselves as a whole. We think this way because we understand the story is telling us the people of the world did - in fact - come together to make this idea a reality; and that is a large part of why God had to put an end to it all. God could not allow all of humanity to simply go down into sin together without the hope at least some might be saved. That being said, we should realize the statement here in verse 4 is only partly about making a name for all humanity. Those who came up with this concept were certainly aiming at an idea that would stand for human achievement, but they knew the way to draw everyone in was to make a name for themselves and their specific ideas. They wanted there to be no doubt the concepts they were already following were the best things going. If there were people thinking about launching out across the world outside their realm of influence, they wanted to make them think again. If there were those not really convinced this central leadership idea was the way to go, they wanted to say to them, but look what our great leader and our ideas can accomplish. Surely, you will never be able to top what we have done here!

Now, the idea of building a structure whose top would reach the heavens is often looked at as the idea they wanted to build a tower all the way to God. There are even those who teach that God confounded their languages because man was invading God's space or realm. These are the same kinds of people who in later times said God would punish man for going out to the moon or into outer space in general. Many just do not see the simplicity of the fact - God intends us to live in the time and space He created for us. What God did not create us to be, was controlling of others. This is why we are told, especially in the latter parts of the Word of God, not to be judgmental. (Matt. 7:1-5) People take this as meaning we should not teach or say anything to each other about one another's actions and/or activities; but what God is really trying to get through our heads is that ultimately He will judge us all as individuals, based on our own actions and choices! Make no mistake in thinking because others approve or disapprove of you, that fact will hold any weight with God. However, what we personally approve or disapprove of will!

This means, as we attempt to communicate to others that we feel or believe a certain way, it should truly be what we feel is right before God, and something we are attempting to live by ourselves. We should have no illusion that we have the right to make others' choices for them, or that we can depend on others to make our choices for us.

These truths are exactly why God gave a commandment that we respect the establishment of the family unit. As children, we grow to learn we are individuals standing before God. However, no matter how young we are when we truly begin to grasp this truth, we must continue to honor God's establishment of family by realizing it is important we obey our parents while we are living with them and/or dependent on or desirous of their care. As adults, we must honor God's establishment of family by caring about under what circumstances we engage in physical relationships. You can like it or not, but it is deviant to engage in a physical relationship if it is not between male and female. We know this is true because there would be no physical relationship dynamics between humans if God had not chosen to create male and female. (Gen. 2:18-25) Thus, when you engage in such an activity, it brings about the possibility you, along with the person you are with, will become parents of another human. This automatically comes with those same responsibilities your parents have/had: meaning parents should be in a life-long committed relationship that the children can honor. The family is the long and short of God giving authority to people over other people, and it's a big responsibility! This should compel us, as much as anything in life, to daily seek the assistance of The One Who created us all!

The problem with the tower was that its intent was to take the natural God-given responsibilities intended for the raising and care of children in a family, and expand them to be those of rulership and power given into the hands of man-chosen "leaders" over people in general. The emphasis that on top of this idea they were not attempting to just protect and/or care for the individual - such as a parent should do for a child - is in the fact they did not just care about promoting their ideas as a "very good" option. In order to obligate and force people into those ideas, they saw it no longer mattered to take the unshakable truth that God is truly every individual's leader, ruler, and ultimate judge, and bring that down to also seem as if it was or can be in men's hands. (Rom. 1:20-23) In a way, it is true God confounded our languages because we were invading His realm. However, it was/is not the realm of physical space, it was/is our attempt to make it seem as if it's possible for man to invade the realm of His authority, we are talking about. (Isa. 14:12-15)

Now, there is no doubt that humans of the past did not understand the vastness of space, and the idea of building a tall tower was certainly based partially on the idea they could get closer to where God is. However, the main point of physically building a tall structure, which would reach unto heaven, was to get above the tallest natural structures - such as trees and surrounding hills and/or mountains - which might block ones view of the entire sky. This is because the

archaic religion of astrology is based on the idea the stars are just sunlight shining through holes in a canvas, which blocks out most of the sunlight to create night. Then it is believed the patterns of these points of light hold meaning and power to affect men. Thus, with enough knowledge, they can be understood or read; and in doing so, one can predict certain things about the future! It is also very likely this structural concept was based on another false assumption of men, which is that the earth was flat. If you believed this was true, then it would have seemed possible that if the tower was built tall enough, you could literally see all there was to see in all directions. If true, this would make the tower a beacon for all to see, no matter how far they roamed, as well as a reason to believe one could never get out of Nimrod's sight!

All this would truly seem to make someone in Nimrod's position a god. Reaching not into heaven but “unto” heaven has to do with obtaining power. There are obvious limits to the physical accomplishments of any human. Nimrod had likely got about as much out of that as he could at this point; but, if you're going to mimic power, what greater power could there seem to be than that of predicting, if not controlling time itself? We know astrology is one of the oldest religions or ideas on the earth, and in spite of the confounding of languages, the idea of building high temples, most with a platform of some kind at the very top as the literal and figurative highest place of worship, is seen all around the globe! There is no reason not to believe the ideas of telling man's future by reading the stars started here with this tower. What is not clear is how much Nimrod himself and those in what we might call his “administration” really believed in all this, or how much the idea was known to be a lot of trickery just to gain the support of the people and capture them into certain base ideas. In any case, we see that people, even today, still believe in things such as astrology in spite of the fact it is based on ideas about the universe we know without a doubt are untrue. We know the earth is not the center of our universe and not even our solar system. The sun does not revolve around the earth but the earth around the sun. The stars are not holes in a covering that allow points of sunlight and its believed power through in certain patterns, which can be read if you understand the code. In truth, stars tells us our sun is only one of millions of such bodies throughout this universe God created for us. They also only appear to be grouped into the patterns we recognize because of where we set in the universe and view them. In truth, each of them is more distant from us and each other than even “modern” man can truly grasp.

On top of this, there are thousands of years worth of proof that astrology is untrue in the simple fact that telling the future should have enormous ramifications, which astrology has failed to accomplish. If people of today can still believe there is an ability to read the future by looking at the stars, it would have been a small matter for Nimrod to sell the idea in his day! Especially in its infancy, astrology would have been

believed for the same reason many bad products are sold by using false claims or just a handful of claims that it works. There have been studies that show, even if you intentionally take a very poor product into a group of people and tell them they are the first to experience this exciting new thing, just the enthusiasm of that environment can cause people to say positive things about the product. Their positive responses can then be used to sell the product to many others. In these studies, when people are asked why they thought such a poor product - at least initially - warranted a positive testimonial from them, they often can say nothing but that they got caught up in the moment. They are also very often embarrassed about the fact they have been duped; and if not for being told they were intentionally given a bad product, many would never admit they were wrong.

Other factors exist which were fortuitous for Nimrod. The reason many people gamble in spite the high odds that all you will do is lose money, and a lot of it, is the hope or thrill that once in a great while you will hit it big! When people do, they often go about saying to those who told them it was foolish, their one big winning is proof they were right all along. Often people do not even calculate how much they lost on the road to winning big, and how much others had to lose to make it possible. Astrology works by playing off these same hopeful and/or optimistic natures in humans. People see, time and time again, the telling of the future does not ring true, but they hold on in the hope that one of these days it will mean something big for their lives, and bring the gains they hope to obtain. People will even attribute many things to being the proof their vague astrology reading was true, when one had nothing to do with the other. They also cause many things to happen during the course of, especially, a day, week, or short span of time, because they believe they are going to have a bad or good time period!

What it all boiled down to for Nimrod and those who desired power over other men is one of the simple truths we see throughout history. Those who have much success are often very good at reading, not the future, but the basic nature of people, both as individuals as well as their reactions as large groups. The idea Nimrod could guide and provide for them better than they could guide and provide for their own lives is why they elevated him to godlike status in the first place. It would be a very small leap to believe he had also came up with a way to - at least to some degree - tell the future, or maybe even that he already knew and that is what caused his success in the first place. If he was going to offer this to all humans from a central location, and make this kind of power accessible to all individuals through religious observances and practices, how could anyone refuse?

Until next time, Shalom!