

January 11-Genesis 11

The world we live in today gives ample evidence to support the truth that mankind is capable of many great achievements. Our God has given men wonderful abilities and talents that have propelled our societies forward through every age. Our response to these successes should be praise and adoration towards God, but unfortunately it all too often terminates on self adulation and arrogance. This is what takes place in the city of Babel as men and women forget their rightful place before an exalted God and begin to think too highly of themselves.

Verse 3 of chapter 11 details for us great ingenuity and advancements in the civilization of Babel. Evidently, the people of that city discovered a way to make reliable and durable building materials. In so doing, they opened up for themselves opportunity to construct edifices that were stronger and larger than previously possible.

The people of Babel were obviously elated with their achievement, and in verse 4 they provide for us an important lesson regarding how we are to think and react even in the moments of our greatest successes. Verse 4 tells us that after they created new building materials they declared "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves." The people of Babel make a catastrophic mistake in verse 4. Instead of allowing their success to propel them into praise and adoration of God who made their advance possible, they chose to attempt to elevate themselves in the place of God in an effort to bring praise and honor to themselves.

The Bible is replete with commands to praise a name, but it isn't our own name, it is the name of God. David wrote in Psalm 86:12 "I will give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with all my heart and will glorify your name forever." In fact, the Scriptures teach us that we are to glorify God not just in our praise songs or acts of formal worship but in all that we do "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11).

Interestingly enough, however, the Bible also teaches very clearly that those who humble themselves before God, giving Him all the praise and honor He deserves, are the very ones whom God will exalt. James 4:10 says "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." God esteems highly a man with a humble heart. It is this kind of man who will be used greatly by the Lord, not the one who seeks his own fame or recognition like the foolish people of Babel.

Of course, the ultimate example of this is found in the sacrificial life and death of Christ. In fact, in Philippians 2:5-9 we see an example of the biblical model of God exalting the humble as God glorifies Christ as a product of Christ's humble service towards God the Father, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name."