

Habakkuk's Two Tables #24

PART TWO: LINE UPON LINE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S WARNING MESSAGE

“In the history of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, God speaks to the people of today. The condemnation that will fall upon the inhabitants of the earth in this day will be because of their **rejection of light**. Our condemnation in the judgment **will not** result from the fact that we have lived in error, but from the fact that **we have neglected Heaven-sent opportunities for discovering truth**. The means of becoming conversant with the truth are within the reach of all; but, like the indulgent, selfish king, we give more attention to the things that charm the ear, and please the eye, and gratify the palate, than to the things that enrich the mind, the divine treasures of truth. It is through the truth that we may answer the great question, ‘What must I do to be saved?’” *Bible Echo*, September 17, 1894.

NIMROD'S FALL

COVENANT ESTABLISHED

And **Noah builded an altar** unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for **the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth**; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. Genesis 8:20–22.

BABYLON

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in **the land of Shinar**; and they dwelt there. Genesis 11:1–2.

BROKEN COVENANT

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. Genesis 11:3.

And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Exodus 20:25.

And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up *any* iron *tool* upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy God. Deuteronomy 27:5–6.

THE TRUE ALTAR IS CHRIST

“Those who are not connected with God are connected with the enemy of God, and while they may be honest in the advice they give, they themselves are blinded and deceived. Satan puts suggestions into the mind and words into the mouth that are entirely contrary to the mind and will of God. Thus he works through them to allure us into false paths. He will mislead, entangle, and ruin us if he can.

“Anciently it was a great sin for the people of God to give themselves away to the enemy, and open before them either their perplexity or their prosperity. **Under the ancient economy it was a sin to offer sacrifice upon the wrong altar.** It was a sin to offer incense kindled by the wrong fire.

“We are in danger of mingling the sacred and the common. The holy fire from God is to be used in our efforts. **The true altar is Christ; the true fire is the Holy Spirit.** This is our inspiration. It is only as the Holy Spirit leads and guides a man that he is a safe counselor. If we turn aside from God and from His chosen ones to inquire at strange altars we shall be answered according to our works.” *Selected Messages*, book 3, 300.

A CITY AND A TOWER

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Genesis 11:4.

TOWER IS A CHURCH

“In the parable the householder represented God, the vineyard the Jewish nation, and the hedge the divine law which was their protection. **The tower** was a symbol of the **temple.**” *The Desire of Ages*, 597.

And thou, **O tower of the flock**, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Micah 4:8.

“All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second. The prophet says, ‘**O Tower of the flock**, the **stronghold** of the daughter of Zion, unto Thee shall it come, even the first dominion.’” *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1908.

A CITY IS A KINGDOM

And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of **the great city**, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Revelation 11:8.

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, **that great city**, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16,18,19, 21.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me **that great city**, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Revelation 21:10.

INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING—TESTING MESSAGE EMPOWERED

And **the Lord came down** to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. Genesis 11:5.

DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENT

And the Lord said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and **now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.** Genesis 11:6.

EXECUTIVE JUDGMENT—THE SCATTERING

Go to, let us go down, and there **confound their language**, that they may not understand one another's speech. So **the Lord scattered them abroad** from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called **Babel**; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. Genesis 11:7–9.

NIMROD'S REJECTION OF LIGHT

“For a time the descendants of Noah continued to dwell among the mountains where the ark had rested. As their numbers increased, **apostasy soon led to division**. Those who desired to forget their Creator and to cast off the restraint of His law felt a constant annoyance from the teaching and example of their God-fearing associates, and after a time they decided to **separate** from the worshipers of God. **Accordingly they journeyed to the plain of Shinar, on the banks of the river Euphrates**. They were attracted by the beauty of the situation and the fertility of the soil, and upon this plain they determined to make their home.

“Here they decided to build a city, and in it a tower of such stupendous height as should render it the wonder of the world. These enterprises were **designed to prevent the people from scattering** abroad in colonies. God had **directed men to disperse throughout the earth**, to replenish and subdue it; but these Babel builders determined to keep their community united in one body, and **to found a monarchy that should eventually embrace the whole earth**. Thus their city would become the metropolis of a **universal empire**; its glory would command the admiration and homage of the world and render the founders illustrious. **The magnificent tower**, reaching to the heavens, was intended to stand as a monument of **the power and wisdom of its builders**, perpetuating their fame to the latest generations.

“The dwellers on the plain of Shinar **disbelieved God's covenant** that He would not again bring a flood upon the earth. **Many of them denied the existence of God and attributed the Flood to the operation of natural causes**. Others believed in a Supreme Being, and that it was He who had destroyed the antediluvian world; and their hearts, like that of Cain, rose up in rebellion against Him. One object before them in the erection of the tower was to secure their own safety in case of another deluge. By carrying the structure to a much greater height than was reached by the waters of the Flood, they thought to place themselves beyond all possibility of danger. And as they would be able to ascend to the region of the clouds, they hoped to ascertain the cause of the Flood. The whole undertaking was designed to **exalt still further the pride of its projectors and to turn the minds of future generations away from God and lead them into idolatry**.

“When the tower had been partially completed, a portion of it was occupied as a dwelling place for the builders; other apartments, splendidly furnished and adorned, **were devoted to their idols**. The people rejoiced in their success, and **praised the gods of silver and gold**, and set themselves against the Ruler of heaven and earth. **Suddenly** the work that had been advancing so prosperously was checked. **Angels were sent to bring to naught the purpose of the builders**. The tower had reached a lofty height, and it was impossible for the workmen at the top to communicate directly with those at the base; therefore men were stationed at different points, each to receive and report to the one next below him the orders for needed material or other directions concerning the work. As messages were thus passing from one to another **the language was confounded**, so that material was called for which was not needed, and the directions delivered were often the reverse of those that had been given. **Confusion** and dismay followed. All work came to a standstill. There could be no further harmony or co-operation. The builders were wholly unable to account for the strange misunderstandings among them, and in their rage and disappointment they reproached one another. **Their confederacy ended in strife and bloodshed**. **Lightnings from heaven**, as an evidence of God’s displeasure, broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground. Men were made to feel that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens.

“Up to this time all men had spoken the same language; now those that could understand one another’s speech united in companies; some went one way, and some another. ‘The Lord **scattered** them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.’ This dispersion was the means of peopling the earth, and thus the Lord’s purpose was accomplished through the very means that men had employed to prevent its fulfillment.

“But at what a loss to those who had set themselves against God! It was His purpose that as men should go forth to found nations in different parts of the earth they should carry with them a knowledge of His will, that the light of truth might shine undimmed to succeeding generations. Noah, the faithful preacher of righteousness, lived for three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, Shem for five hundred years, and thus **their descendants had an opportunity to become acquainted with the requirements of God and the history of His dealings with their fathers**. **But they were unwilling to listen to these unpalatable truths; they had no desire to retain God in their knowledge**; and by the confusion of tongues they were, in a great measure, shut out from intercourse with those who might have given them light.

“The Babel builders had indulged the spirit of murmuring against God. Instead of gratefully **remembering His mercy to Adam and His gracious covenant with Noah**, they had complained of His severity in expelling the first pair from Eden and destroying the world by a flood. But while they murmured against God as arbitrary and severe, they were accepting the rule of the cruelest of tyrants. Satan was seeking to bring contempt upon the sacrificial offerings that prefigured the death of Christ; and as the minds of the people were darkened by idolatry, he led them to counterfeit these offerings and sacrifice their own children upon the altars of their gods. As men turned away from God, the divine attributes—justice, purity, and love—were supplanted by oppression, violence, and brutality.

“The men of Babel had determined to establish a **government that should be independent of God**. There were some among them, however, who feared the Lord, but who had been deceived by the pretensions of the ungodly and drawn into their schemes. For the sake of these faithful ones the Lord delayed His judgments and gave the people time to reveal their true character. **As this was developed, the sons of God labored to turn them from their purpose; but the people were fully united in their Heaven-daring undertaking**. Had they gone on unchecked, they would have demoralized the world in its infancy. Their **confederacy** was founded in rebellion; a **kingdom established for self-exaltation**, but in which God was to have no rule or honor. Had this **confederacy** been permitted, a mighty power would have borne sway to banish righteousness—and with it peace, happiness, and security—from the earth. For the divine statutes, which are ‘holy and just and good’ (Romans 7:12), **men were endeavoring to substitute laws to suit the purpose of their own selfish and cruel hearts**.

“Those that feared the Lord cried unto Him to interpose. ‘And **the Lord came down** to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.’ In mercy to the world He defeated the purpose of the tower builders and **overthrew the memorial of their daring**. In mercy He confounded their speech, thus putting a check on their purposes of rebellion. God bears long with the perversity of men, giving them ample opportunity for repentance; but He marks all their devices to resist the authority of His just and holy law. From time to time the unseen hand that holds the scepter of government is stretched out to restrain iniquity. Unmistakable evidence is given that the Creator of the universe, the One infinite in wisdom and love and truth, is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, and that none can with impunity defy His power.

“The schemes of the Babel builders ended in shame and defeat. **The monument to their pride became the memorial of their folly**. Yet men are continually pursuing the same course—**depending upon self**, and rejecting God’s law. It is the principle that Satan tried to carry out in heaven; the same that governed Cain in presenting his offering.

“**There are tower builders in our time**. Infidels construct their theories from the supposed deductions of sciences, and reject the revealed word of God. They presume to pass sentence upon God’s moral government; they despise His law and boast of the sufficiency of human reason. Then, ‘because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.’ Ecclesiastes 8:11.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 118–123.

BROKEN COVENANT (THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY WORKING)

WARNING MESSAGE—SHEM

WARNING MESSAGE EMPOWERED—**THE LORD CAME DOWN**. GENESIS 11:5

INVESTIGATION FOLLOWED BY DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENT—**NOW NOTHING WILL BE RESTRAINED FROM THEM (WHICH THEY HAVE IMAGINED)** GENESIS 11:6 (A FALLING AWAY)

EXECUTIVE JUDGMENT—**SCATTERING: THE LORD SCATTERED THEM** GENESIS 11:8

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“In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and **they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven.** Men hang with admiration upon the lips of eloquence while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured without obedience to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God’s standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as **human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word,** there will be divisions and dissension. The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term ‘Babylon,’ which prophecy (Revelation 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the last days.

“Many seek to make a heaven for themselves by obtaining riches and power. They ‘speak wickedly concerning oppression: **they speak loftily**’ (Psalm 73:8), trampling upon human rights and disregarding divine authority. The **proud** may be for a time in great power, and may see success in all that they undertake; but in the end they will find only disappointment and wretchedness.

“The time of God’s investigation is at hand. The Most High will come down to see that which the children of men have builded. His sovereign power will be revealed; the works of human pride will be laid low. ‘The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.’ ‘The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.’ Psalm 33:13, 14, 10, 11.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 123–124.

“Satan has taken the world captive. He has introduced **an idol sabbath,** apparently giving to it great importance. He has stolen the homage of the Christian world away from the Sabbath of the Lord for this **idol sabbath.** The world bows to a tradition, a man-made commandment. **As Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image on the plain of Dura,** and so exalted himself, so Satan exalts himself in this false sabbath, for which he has stolen the livery of heaven.” *Review and Herald*, March 8, 1898.

“The **Sabbath is God’s memorial** to His creative work, and it is a sign that is to be kept before the world. There is to be no compromise with those who are worshipping an **idol sabbath.**” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 13, 69.

A KINGDOM FOR SELF-EXALTATION

“This confederacy was born of rebellion against God. The dwellers on the plains of Shinar **established their kingdom for self-exaltation**, and not for the glory of God. Had they succeeded, a mighty power would have borne away, banishing righteousness, and inaugurating a new religion. The **mixture** of certain **religious ideas with a mass of erroneous theories** would have resulted in closing the door of peace, happiness, and security. These suppositions, erroneous theories, carried out and perfected, would have banished a knowledge of the law of Jehovah from the minds of men, who would not think it necessary to obey the divine statutes. These statutes, which are holy, just, and good, would have been ignored. Determined men, inspired by the first great rebel, would have urged on by him, and would have permitted nothing to interfere with their plans, or to stop them in their evil course. In the place of the divine precepts **they would have substituted laws** framed in accordance with the desires of their selfish hearts in order that they might carry out their purposes.

“But God never leaves the world without **witnesses** for Him. Those who loved and feared Him at the time of the first great apostasy after the flood, humbled themselves, and cried unto him. ‘Oh God,’ they pleaded, ‘interpose thyself between thy cause and the plans and methods of men’ ‘and the Lord came down to see the city and the tower (**the great idol-building**), which the children of men builded.’ He defeated the purpose of the tower builders, and over-threw **the memorial of their rebellion**. God bears long with the perversity of men, giving them ample opportunity for repentance; but He marks all their devices to resist the authority of His just and holy law. As an evidence of His displeasure over the building of the tower, he confounded the language of the builders, so that none could understand the words of his fellow-worker.

“The Lord has not ordered some of the arrangements that have been made in **Battle Creek**. He has declared that other places have been robbed of the light and advantages that have been centered and multiplied in **Battle Creek**. Through a circular letter sent out to the leading men and the church elders of our conferences, a call has been made for the names of young men and young women of capability, in order that they may be corresponded with and invited to come to **Battle Creek** to receive a training for missionary work.

“Through the light given in the *Testimonies*, **the Lord has indicated that He does not desire students to be educated in Battle Creek**. He instructed us to remove the College from this place. This was done, but the institutions that remained failed of doing what they should have done in sharing with other places the advantage still centered in **Battle Creek**. The Lord signified His displeasure over this matter by destroying two of the principal institutions remaining there.

“Notwithstanding the plain evidences of the Lord’s providence in these destructive fires, men in council meetings have not hesitated to stand before their brethren and make light of the statement that these buildings were burned because men had been swaying things in directions the Lord could not approve.” *Kress Collection*, 1–2.