

## **The Tower of Babel**

**By Elder David Pyles**

The story of the tower of Babel recorded in Genesis 11 has far-reaching implications, especially important for our times. The Bible says that the human race was rapidly expanding and spreading from its point of origin in lower Mesopotamia. Some then became possessed with the fear that mankind would be “*scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth,*” (vs 4). To avert this possibility, they purposed to build a great city with a huge monument to serve as a point of concentration and centralization. All indications are that they intended this city, with its unequalled monument, to be the new capitol of the world.

The world was of course mostly undiscovered and undeveloped at that point. Perhaps even Europe was uninhabited and maybe Africa too. Much less would we expect men to have ventured into distant places like North America, South America, Australia, etc. But we see that adventuresome and ambitious men and women were ready to explore the world and put it to their advantage. All this was in obedience to divine commandment, because God had said to man, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,*” (Gen 1:28). This famous passage, sometimes known as the “dominion covenant,” is widely interpreted as a commandment to ambitiously explore, analyze and utilize the earth and its resources.

Now we must ask: Exactly who was it that feared the spread of the human race? Was it those brave adventurers who were ready to take to foot, horse and boat to seek out knowledge, resources and opportunity? Surely it was not. Nor would we expect this attitude to be prevalent among typical people. The common man nearly always relishes the freedom and opportunity to further himself by wit, work and risk-taking. About the only type of person that would fear such spread of humans would be those seeking power and control over them. This would explain why God opposed the tower of Babel and thwarted it by confounding the conspirators with diverse languages.

This event established an important precedent that will pertain throughout the Bible. It is that God is opposed to centralization

and concentration of power. Later, when He would set up a government over Israel, it was a hierarchical system where business was handled at lower levels wherever feasible (Exo 18). When Israel thereafter clamored for a king, God warned that they would sorely regret it (1Sam 8). When God conceded to them and allowed a king, He prohibited an outright autocrat but commanded that the king himself be subject to the Law (Dt 17). Again, when God set up His church, He gave neither precept nor precedent for super-church governing entities but made each church an independent, self-governing body subject to the law of Christ. Finally, in its doleful prophecies of the last days, the Bible describes the world as being consolidated under the iron grip of a wicked, persecuting despot, commonly known as the “antichrist” but described in the Bible as “the beast” (Rev 13 & 17).

Almost never does the Bible present centralization and concentration of power in a favorable light, and this will explain why Bible-based Christians have nearly always been suspicious of big government. The facts of history unequivocally corroborate the Bible on this point. When power is concentrated in a few people, blood will almost invariably begin to flow. Common men, who would otherwise find ways to live with each other in peace, will be required to kill each other to make competing rich men even richer and competing powerful men even more powerful. There is surely significance to the fact that wars between true democracies are almost unknown to history. Also, the tax burden imposed by these centralized powers will have a clear tendency to increase, mostly to finance their ever-increasing surveillance and control over the common man, and to offset the inefficiency and waste that nearly always accompanies centralized systems. Hence, those in power cause the common man to be oppressed by the very wealth that the common man has labored to produce. Finally, these centralized powers will quite naturally oppose all that opposes them, meaning that they will oppose God Himself and His teachings – teachings with which God has been warning us even from the earliest days of the earth.