

Nimrod: The Rebellious Panther

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CHAPTER TWO -

THE WATERS GO, AND THE HUNTER COMES

We are today dealing with the period lying between the beaching of Noah's Ark and the building of the Tower of Babel, inclusive. It was one of the most decisive periods of history. It was the womb of the post-deluvian world. The character of the world's religion, politics and economics was decided here. (As I have before remarked in these articles, I do not of course include the true religion in the world's religions).

How long was this period and how many people were involved? If everybody would leave everything alone, we would have no trouble answering these questions. All we would have to do would be to turn to Archbishop Ussher's *Annals of the Old and New Testament*; there we would find that the world was created Sunday, October 23, 4004 B.C. - whether in the morning or afternoon we are not told - that Adam and Eve were created on Friday, October 28; that the Flood occurred in the year 2348, and that the Tower of Babel was built 2247.

That of course simplifies everything and makes it easy. You subtract 2247 from 2348; that gives you 101 years between the Flood and the building of the Tower. As to the number of people involved, that too is not so complicated. You set your wife, who is uncommonly good on genealogies and their related questions, to the task of ascertaining the approximate number of people which would, in those days develop from four original families in 100 years; you take her results and check them with three or four (other) authorities; you then put them all together and shake them up to try to separate as much wheat from as much chaff as possible, and you then divide the result of that by 2 for human fudging and failings. And so - after a night's sleep on it, you decide that you wouldn't be forced to snicker in the presence of your cautious, conservative brethren if you should say that the number was in the neighborhood of 2500.

But everybody won't leave everything alone. Nobody will leave anything alone. Hales also has a chronological system. And his system also rests on AUTHORITY. Ussher's and Hales' are pretty much alike - except they differ about 1000 years. Several things could happen in 1000 years. And there are many others, all alike except they all differ.

Our question is narrowed to the number of years lying between the Flood and the Tower. Fortunately, we don't have to concern ourselves with the dates of the Creation or even the Flood.

We shall turn from the AUTHORITIES to Peleg. We are told about him in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis. To help answer our question, Peleg gives us a sound leg to stand on.

"And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg . . ." (Genesis 10:25).

After the Flood how many years rolled by before Peleg was born"? We shall find the answer in the eleventh chapter.

"Shem... begat Arphaxad two years after the flood" (Genesis 11:10).

Now the wheels are beginning to take hold; we are getting on some solid ground. Two years after the Flood a child named Arphaxad was born to the wife of Shem.

And we go on:

Arphaxad lived 35 years and begat Salah. That gives us 37 years after the Flood.

And Salah lived 30 years and begat Eber. That gives us 67 years.

And Eber lived 34 years and begat Peleg. That gives us 101 years after the Flood.

And so Peleg was born 101 years after the Flood. And Peleg lived 30 years and begat a child named Reu (Genesis 11:18). After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years that we know about (v. 19).

And so we know that Peleg lived 239 years. Add that to the 101 years between the Flood and his birth and we have 340 years between the Flood and our last glimpse of Peleg.

Here is why Peleg throws so much light on the answer to our question. We read:

" . . . for in his days was the earth divided . . ." (Genesis 10:25).

What does "**was the earth divided**" mean? (Peleg, by the way, means division.)

Here the AUTHORITIES again go for their bats and hatchets, bless them. Some say it means a division between the Abrahamic and Arabian lines. Some say it simply means the division of the EARLIER POPULATION. (A division into what?) One says that it means that an earthquake took place and divided the earth up into its present geographical shape. (At least his division is easy to keep separate from the others; it stands out where we can see it.)

Keil says that it was a division which took place in consequence of the building of the Tower of Babel. If we ignore the chapter division in Genesis (chapter 11) and read from Peleg (in the 10th chapter) straight on through the eleventh chapter, where the building of the Tower, the confusion of tongues and the "scattering" take place, I think we will agree that logic and common sense are with Keil. There is also Scripture for it.

In Psalm 55:9 the same Hebrew word for DIVIDE appears, and in connection with a division of tongues. "**DESTROY, O LORD, AND DIVIDE THEIR TONGUES . . .**"

The DIVISION was the division of the people into nations following the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel

That division took place "**in the days**" of Peleg. Here again the AUTHORITIES have their eyes on us. Some of them say "**the days**" refer to the days of his birth. But with all due respect for them (and frankly, nobody has more), I respectfully suggest that when you refer to "**the days**" of a man you do not refer to his diaper-and-rompers period, but to the days of his maturity, influence, achievements and accomplishments.

But we have got to bring this thing to some kind of conclusion. Already we wish we had listened to the old woman who said that the King James Version of the Bible, including Ussher's chronology, was good enough for Paul and Silas and it was good enough for her. And I knew of one Louisville theological student who never had any trouble with chronology: he used the *Black Draught Almanac*.

We will give and take, and strike a bargain. From the Flood to the last we see of Peleg, we have 340 years. We will give the AUTHORITIES 140 years of that just to show them that we are not as cantankerous as we have seemed to be.

We will say that the period we are studying - from the Flood to the building of the Tower of Babel, inclusive - covers a flat 200 years. We will say that we are dealing with 5000 people.

Enormous movements and developments can take place in 200 years, especially when you remember that the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock only 331 years ago, and that the Constitution of the United States is only 162 years old. Neither Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Cromwell or George Washington lived 100 years. And our own eyes have seen one world order exhaust itself and another rise. The Kaiser, Lenin, Stalin, Tojo, Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt have all lived and died (all except Stalin) before our own eyes. Our own eyes have seen two world wars, and they are now witnessing a third. And none of us is 100 years old - although some of us have lived 500!

THE MIGHTY HUNTER

When you reflect that in India today, despite its heavy populated communities with modern weapons of defense, tigers every year kill 1000 people and 32,000 head of cattle, and a single man-eating tiger frequently causes temporary abandonment of an entire district, you will have little difficulty appreciating what a fearful, life-and-death problem the rapid breeding and spreading of wild beasts presented to the sparsely populated world within even a few years after the Flood. ¹

A lioness, whose gestation period is five months, has an annual brood of from two to four cubs, and she nourishes them but a year. And she goes on living, on an average, for 22 years. (In 1760 a lion died in the Tower of London which had lived in captivity for 70 years.) A leopard has from two to four kittens every year. The tiger, which reaches a length of 11 feet, including tail, never permits the lion and leopard to outdo him in producing offspring.

Beside the lion, leopard and tiger there were other wild beasts: Hyena, lynx, wild cat, wolf, jackal, wild boar, buffalo, stag, gazelle, jerboa, hare, badger and porcupine. ²

Within, say, 10 years those comparatively few families were surrounded by a jungle of wild

beasts. The lion, in some instances measuring 10 feet from nose to tip of tail, was the fierce master of the sandy plains, rocky places, thorn thickets and the tall grasses and weeds along the streams. And he was not afraid of the open places and broad daylight. It was a fearful sight - the powerful leap of concentrated savagery upon an unsuspecting stag, its being crushed down by the weight of the attack, the hellish furious mauling and biting of the head, the breaking of the neck by a wrench, the tearing open of the veins and arteries! No wonder the Arabs still tremble at the lion's approach and quickly offer to him the choicest of their flocks and herds.

The wooded and rocky regions were converted into realms of quick death by the leopard; and the noiseless, stealthy tiger was waiting in the thick brushwood and jungles. And it isn't the merriest of feeling for a man, however brave he may be, to be forced to contemplate meeting up with a wild full buffalo or wild boar, on the shortest of journeys.

The problem of wild beasts had ceased to be just one of the problems the early world faced: it had come to the place where it must be decided whether man or beast was to survive.

And now, against this background, go back again to the tenth chapter of Genesis and read the familiar, but ordinarily vague, words:

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10:8 ff).

Through four words of that first sentence - "**he began to be**" - we get a key-hole view of the rising, predominant personality of Nimrod, with all its aggressive independence, initiative, courage, defiance, and daring. He doesn't become a hero at one jump; it is a gradual process.

And here you have one of the profoundest mysteries of life: the rise of one man, and often as not, the most unpromising, above all the others, and the master of all the others. Nimrod has the same background as the others, the same environment, eats the same kind of food, has the same associates; yet, he begins to be a mighty one. . .

You say that Nimrod was Satan's man. That is true; but what led him to become Satan's man? And Satan had other men; nearly all of them were Satan's men, as we shall see next week. How do you explain Nimrod's becoming the chief of them all?

Nimrod had the restless, reflective mind, the brooding spirit, the great ambition. And all the aches and sorrow and loneliness and disappointment that go with them. There were times - and many times - when he was afraid, when he was a coward, when he was defeated.

But, unlike the others, Nimrod's iron will, like the trainer of jungle beasts, becomes the master of all his defects. Nimrod will fight with his aches, will fight with his loneliness, will fight with his fears and cowardice, will fight with his disappointments.

How do you explain that? If you could do it, without generalizing, you could write a best-seller, become rich - and probably divorced.

The chances are, nine to one, that Nimrod's rise to greatness, humanly speaking, was started by some purely accidental, trivial thing. Was he accidentally in the right place at the right time, and did he accidentally articulate the thoughts and wishes of the others? Did they all applaud, and did that applause arouse some latent force in his personality? Did he accidentally kill a beast? Or, did some friend, with intelligent sympathy and admiration, drop into his ear the right phrase at the right time?

You need not write me that there is in this world no such thing as 'accident'. I know that. I merely use it as a convenient vehicle to convey an idea. I know that, after all, Nimrod may have deliberately and intelligently planned everyone of the 'accidents', as Winston Churchill plans many of his 'stammers'.

But what makes them do it?

On the bad side, what makes the Nimrods, Alexanders, Caesars, Napoleons and Hitlers; on the good side, what makes the Pauls, Augustines, Calvins, Wesleys, Finneys, and Moodys?

You say, Satan makes the first; GOD makes the latter. But what causes Satan's men to be Satan's men, and what causes GOD's men to be GOD's men: what determines the choice in either case?

We will leave all of that for the young theologians and philosophers to chew on. I merely raise the questions to cut some of the current big crop of infallibles down to size.

The need and the man meet: the world is full of wild beasts - and the world has Nimrod.

Nimrod's bravery has gradually gathered about him a small army of hunters. Led by Nimrod, they deliberately search for the strongest and fiercest beasts that walk. They especially search for the lion and wild bull. Nimrod will corner a wild bull, spar with him, suddenly seize him by an ear and a leg, and break the leg. He will walk up, with bow and arrow, to within ten feet of a lion and slay it. At other times he will kill the furious beast with a spear, as it springs. He fights lions with short sword in hand-to-claw combat. At the head of his band, he hunts wild animals, in boats. ³

Nimrod and his men, in that early world, occupied a position somewhere between King Arthur and his Knights and Jesse James and his Band. Nimrod's was the greatest name on earth. (Assyria means the land of Ninus (Nimrod) the hunter.)

And it has remained one of the greatest - if not THE greatest, on the wicked side. In the days of Moses, more than 800 years later, if a person or thing was MIGHTY, it was like Nimrod, the mighty hunter. The name of no hunter has ever risen as high as Nimrod's.

Last November 25 (1951) the Chicago Tribune had this head-line on its front page;

OSCAR GIVES THE BIRD TO 198 NIMRODS

Oscar was a stuffed pheasant at Maroa, Illinois. Its owner, a farmer and amateur taxidermist, had put Oscar in his fenced bean field, 100 feet from the paved road. Two hundred hunters (it was

the opening day of the hunting season), without asking the owner's permission, when they saw Oscar, and thinking him to be a live bird, brought their cars to screeching stops, got out, and fired away.

Why did the Tribune head-line writer refer to those hunters as NIMRODS? Why didn't he refer to them as Tiglath Pileasers (old Tiglath claimed to have killed 800 lions)? Why didn't he refer to them as Teddy Roosevelts (Teddy was a great hunter, according to Teddy, the greatest that ever lived)?

Why, after these thousands of years, does the name of Nimrod brood, even there in Tribune Tower, on Michigan Avenue, as the greatest name ever associated with hunting?

There is in this world no such thing as an ACCIDENT.

¹ **"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered"** (Genesis 9:2). That is, the dread of man shall be upon every beast, etc. Man is to be master. There may be deeper meaning in this **"the fear of you"** than we have ordinarily considered. Suppose all the beasts, including serpents, should attack man on sight? - N.S

² These are mentioned by Rawlinson as being indigenous in Babylonia. George Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, v. I, p. 39. (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1870).

³ These are deductions from the hunting-scene figures which are to be found in nearly all the works on the Babylonian-Assyrian world.

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