

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The First Human Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

“And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. ⁷ And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Yahweh.’ ¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, ¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.”

Genesis 10:6-12

“But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

Matthew 20:25-28

The ‘present evil age’ that Paul wrote about in Galatians 1:4 became entrenched on planet earth when Adam and Eve chose to disregard God’s command, and follow the counsel of the serpent (Gen. 3:1-7). The effects of the spiritual shift were felt immediately. They “*knew that they were naked*” (3:7). The word for “naked” here means “empty, vulnerable, exposed, with no protection or resources”. They were driven out from the Garden into a world of labor, hardship and difficulty. Instead of the fullness of the Garden, where food was readily available for the picking, they went out into a world where they had to labor hard to survive, ...and nature seemed to be obstinately set against them.

The “blame game” we saw in the Garden, when God asked them about what they had done, escalated into comparison, rivalry, hatred and even murder, as Cain took the life of his brother, Abel. In punishment for his crime, God sent him out to be a *vagrant and wanderer*. The earth, which had been his area of specialty, and his livelihood, would no longer bear fruit abundantly. Stripped of his livelihood, he went out to the east of Eden. Instead of living with the consequences of his actions, and accepting God’s judgment, *in defiance of God’s command, Cain built a city*. Refusing to become a “vagrant and a wanderer”, he and his offspring raised livestock, and created and sold musical instruments and implements of bronze and iron. **Instead of living from the fruit of the land, they devised their own livelihood from the work of their hands.**

We see, also, an increasing level of violence, as Lamech, five generations later, *killed* a young man for striking him, and boasted to retaliate seven-fold on anyone who would try to punish him (Gen. 4:1-24). **This increasing violence, and corruption of even the animals, resulted in the destruction of almost all animal life**, except for Noah and his family, and the animals preserved in the ark (Gen. 6-9).

In the very next chapter, as the sons of Noah multiply and spread out into nations, we read of the first “kingdom”. God’s original commission to Adam and Eve was to “fill the earth and bring it into service” (Gen. 1:28). **The plan was to go everywhere, to spread out, to explore, discover and make use of the world God had made.** They were to spread out as family groups, and there would be plenty for everyone. **Instead, what we find is a resistance to spreading out, ...an opposition to what should be a natural way of living, by farming the land, raising crops, developing family farms, ...an exaltation and hunger for power, and a domination and control over other people.**

We read that Nimrod, a great-grandson of Noah, one descended through Ham and Cush, became a “mighty one” in the earth. He was a ‘mighty hunter’ or a “strong provider” in the face of God. He was famous, and it became a proverb, “According as Nimrod, a mighty hunter (or ‘strong provider’) in the face of God.” Now, on the surface, this seems like an innocuous reference to a man of great skill in hunting. **There are important clues, however, that tell us there is more going on than simply that Nimrod was a famous hunter.**

First of all, as kind of a back story, meat was not even a part of the original diet God intended for humankind. They were given the fruit of the trees, and every green plant to eat from. **However, after the flood, God gave people the animals as a food source.** He also put a fear of humanity upon these creatures, so they would not easily be captured and killed. Stop and think about this development. **Before the flood, humankind produced food by growing crops.** They took no animal life. They planted and tended vegetation to produce more vegetation. Now, after the flood, they not only produced vegetation, they also could eat meat by *taking the life* of animals. **Now, through violence and blood, they ate from the accumulated growth that the animals gained through eating their diets.** At the very least, Nimrod was especially skilled at this. To us, this might not seem to be unusual, because our American diet is unusually high in meat. Even shepherds and livestock tenders in Biblical times, however, ate very

little meat, on a daily basis. They ate mostly a vegetable-based diet. Meat was an unusual treat, or for special occasions, or for the wealthy.

Second, he “became a mighty one in the earth”. Most of the time, the term “mighty” is used in conjunction with warriors, e.g., “mighty men” (Josh 6:2). What of Nimrod? He developed a “kingdom”, a very extensive kingdom. It began with Babel (Babylon), in southern Mesopotamia, near the Persian Gulf, and extended northwestern up to Nineveh, nearly 500 miles. (Chicago is only 400 miles from Saint Paul.) This was no small empire. It covered virtually all of the eastern half of “the fertile crescent”. Nimrod was the first person described as a “king”. So, his “might” was not just his physical prowess, or his hunting skill, it was the power to conquer, subjugate, and dominate people. He became a “great one” because he exalted himself over other people, warred against them, and dominated them.

Third, the name “Nimrod” is significant. Many Bible dictionaries indicate that the name, Nimrod, means “rebel”. He was a rebel against God. In the proverbial description of him, “a mighty hunter *in the face of Yahweh*” or “before Yahweh”, the Hebrew could be easily describing one in opposition to the will of God, taking a rebellious stand against the will of God. It is not by accident, I believe, that the tower of Babel incident took place in Nimrod’s first capital city. Note that the intent of the people involved was to defy God’s will, ...to “*not* be spread abroad across the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). They decided to build a tower to “make a name for themselves”. This arrogance and rebellion seem to be consistent with Nimrod’s character. He, too, sought fame and power. He was unwilling to be a simple farmer. He wanted to exalt himself above others. He wanted to subjugate and control others. But there is more. The ancient languages of Akkadian and Proto-Indo-European carried the meaning of words in the consonants. The root word behind the name Nimrod is from the MRD. The verbal form would have been *marad*. To make it a noun, they would have added an M or an N, and the vowels would then shift to compensate, NiMRoD. These ancient languages underlie many of the European languages that have come through even to modern English. What words come from *marad*? MaRauDer and MuRDer are direct derivatives of this ancient word. And the verb, *marad* meant to “strike, destroy”. So, the name Nimrod is not just a “rebel”. He was a marauder, an attacker, one who went from place to place attacking, pillaging, plundering, murdering and subjugating people. How else would his kingdom have spread a distance of 500 miles?

Nimrod was not just a “hunter” of animals, he was a “hunter” of people! Through violence and blood, he profited and prospered off the work of other people. Instead of producing his own sustenance, he raided, murdered, plundered and subjugated other people, and stole the fruits of *their* labors. He gathered to himself other people, ...fellow marauders, murderers, plunderers, profiteers and administrative officials who joined him in his exploits and established his kingdom. They were also fed by the plunder of their victims, and the injustice of their oppression.

This is the way of the world, isn’t it? *This is the story of the rise and falls of kingdoms and civilizations across the globe, and throughout history.* Nimrod was just the first of many “mighty men” who became “mighty hunters of people right in the face of God”. ***This is the kind of kingdom which is produced by this present evil age.*** It is fed and propelled by the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of arrogance and self-exaltation. It rides on the backs, and feeds off the plunder and hard work of others. The “mighty”, the “great”, the “powerful” in this age are often those who abuse and take advantage of others.

Jesus’ disciples were of the same mindset. They were wanting to be exalted next to Him. They were thinking that they were going to rule and dominate others, ...just as they had seen people of power do to them and others all of their lives. ***Jesus stopped them right in their tracks, however. He said that His kingdom was not at all like the kingdoms of this world-system, ...the kingdoms of this age.*** He said, “the ones ruling the nations lord-it-down-upon them and exercise-authority-down-upon them, ...but *it will not be as this among you.* Instead, whoever might wish to be great among you will become a servant to all; and whoever might wish to be first among you will be your slave, *just as* the Son of man did not come to *be served*, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom (*a price* to buy someone *else’s* freedom) for many” (Matt. 20:25-28).

While Nimrod was a powerful “hunter of men” to dominate, subjugate, and take from them. **Jesus came to call us to be “fishers of men”, ...to learn to attract and capture the loyalties of people for a King who loves them, and who willingly gave His life to set them free.** While the kingdoms of *this age* are like *the god of this age*, who comes only to steal, kill and destroy (2 Cor. 4:4; Jn 10:10), ...**the Kingdom of the Age to Come, and those who walk by the Spirit of this Age to Come, come to offer life, life overflowing, ...and the servants and followers of this King are of the same heart and Spirit that He exemplified.** They are willing to lay down their lives to invest in the lives of others, so that they might be benefitted, built up, set free, healed and invigorated with Life of the Age to Come.

While Nimrod was a marauder and murderer, we are to be “martyrs”, ...witnesses who testify of the transforming power of the Kingdom of God, and who exemplify it by our love and service. Instead of being “mighty in God’s face”, let’s be mighty with God’s heart, ...people who demonstrate the radical difference of God’s Kingdom.