

Nimrod; A Mighty Hunter

'This is the history of the descendants of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and the sons born to them after the flood ... The sons of Ham were Cush, Egypt (Mizraim), Put and Canaan ... Cush became the father of Nimrod. He was the first to be a mighty king on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord, therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh in the land of Shinar (in Mesopotamia, Babylonia – modern-day Iraq). Out of the land of Shinar, Nimrod went forth into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah. Together, these (towns, villages) made the great city (of Nineveh)' (Genesis 10:1, 6, 8 to 12).

Nimrod was the most advanced leader in the four hundred years between Noah and Abraham. He was the great-grandson of Noah, grandson of Ham, son of Cush and brother of Egypt (Mizraim) (Genesis 10:6), born after Noah's worldwide flood and he would have lived through a very difficult period of history as the world was being rapidly repopulated by both humans and animals. When Nimrod lived on earth, the entire population spoke only one language. Nimrod was a very enterprising man; the world's first entrepreneur. As a 'mighty hunter' he not only provided meat for the population, he would have protected the population from wild animals, which were abundant in that area in those days because they would have only recently come off the Ark and were breeding at a rapid pace. Ancient rock art depicts the entire area was filled with various species of animals of all breeds and sizes. Ancient seals found in Babylon revealed the king in combat with a lion.

Nimrod was the leader during the time of rapid growth in Mesopotamia. The Lord told people to spread out and repopulate the earth. 'God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth ... Bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it"' (Genesis 9:1 & 7). The general population had other plans. They built the Tower of Babel in an effort to control the rapid spread of humans and keep them in one place, which was opposite to what the Lord told them, so the Lord had to confuse the language to stop them. Confusing their language was God's way of dispersing the population to do what He had told them to do, replenish the entire earth not just Mesopotamia. Although Nimrod was the king of Babel (Genesis 10:10) there is no Scriptural evidence to say he actually built the Tower. The construction was a joint effort, with no particular leader at the time of the building of the Tower. The Scriptures make it clear the Tower was not ordered by any one person or king but was built by the people to stop the spread of the population. Nimrod's name was not mentioned in regard to its construction. 'The whole earth was of one language and of one speech. As the people travelled east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar (Babylonia) and lived there. They said one to another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." They had brick for stone and they used tar for mortar. They said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth"' (Genesis 11:1 to 4). So the entire population of Babylonia disobeyed the direct instruction from the Lord to spread out across the earth. After the languages were confused, the population and the various languages eventually spread out across the earth. The descendents of Shem moved up into Europe and from Shem came the Jewish people and our Messiah Jesus. The descendents of Japheth moved to Asia. The descendents of Ham moved to Africa. 'These three were the sons of Noah and from these three sons the whole earth was populated' (Genesis 9:19). 'Of these were the islands of the nations divided in their lands, everyone after his own language, after their families in their nations ... These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations. Of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood' (Genesis 10:5 & 32). Eber, the great grandson of Shem and an ancestor of Abraham took the Hebrew language and preserved it and his name Eber is where we get the word Hebrew. Hebrew is the language of the Jewish people and of the Bible.

After Babylon, Nimrod built several other cities. Babylon was once known as the 'Land of Nimrod'. Nimrod moved hundreds of kilometres north and founded the city of Nineveh and the other cities named in the first paragraph. All of these cities became Nimrod's northern kingdom and for many centuries after the death of Nimrod, Nineveh and Babylon were the ruling cities of the known world. Cuneiform inscriptions confirm the city of Nineveh was colonised by people who went with Nimrod from Babylon as the Bible says (Genesis 10:11). Work on the Tower was paused temporarily but resumed by the people who remained living in Babylon, of which Nimrod played no part because he had left the area to build Nineveh. Babylon was built around the Tower. It became a pattern for similar towers in other cities and may possibly have been a precursor to the pyramids built in the Land of

Egypt and other areas around the world. Egypt was founded and named after Egypt Mizraim the brother of Cush so it is very possible the descendents of Egypt Mizraim copied the building plans of those who built the Tower of Babylon. An inscription etched on an ancient stone tablet found in Babylon reads, "The building of this illustrious tower offended the gods. In one night they threw down what had been built. They scattered the people abroad and made strange their speech." Archaeology has proven the Tower of Babel certainly did exist and the ruins of the Tower can still be seen in Babylon, in Iraq.

There are a lot of negative things written about Nimrod by Christian writers, but there is no Scriptural evidence to support their claims. The Scriptures do not state anywhere Nimrod was wicked or that he did evil in the sight of God or that he enticed others to be wicked. When someone was wicked, the Scriptures state they were wicked. When they enticed others to do wickedly, we are told about it. For example, 'Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord and dealt wickedly above all' (1 Kings 16:25). 'Ahab the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord' (1 Kings 16:30). 'Manasseh did wickedly above all and made Judah to sin with their idols' (2 Kings 21:11). 'Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Ahaziah king of Israel did very wickedly' (2 Chronicles 20:35). 'Libnah ... led Judah astray' (2 Chronicles 21:11).

No such statement was ever written about Nimrod. Nimrod was a hunter and was the great-grandson of Noah, who was a very righteous man. The Bible tells us, 'Cush became the father of Nimrod. He was the first to be a mighty king on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord"' (Genesis 10:8 & 9). Nimrod was the first great king on the earth. He was a mighty hunter 'before the Lord' and what hunters do, is provide food. The phrase 'before the Lord' means he was aware of the presence of the Lord and he hunted in the presence of God. When we serve God, whatever we do, we do all things before the Lord (Colossians 3:23). If we study the Scriptures carefully, the people who came 'before the Lord' were righteous people. 'Three times in the year all of your men will appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel' (Exodus 34:23). Hannah poured out her heart and soul before the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15). All nations will worship before the Lord and glorify His name (Psalm 86:9). The two holy witnesses stand before the Lord (Revelation 11:4). Zachariah and Elizabeth were righteous before the Lord, walking blamelessly in all the commandments (Luke 1:6). All of these people who came 'before the Lord' were God-fearing. Rebellious or wicked people cannot come 'before the Lord'. The fact that Nimrod hunted before the Lord, strongly infers that he knew the Lord, and we know God would not have accepted his work if he had been wicked. Notice, the Lord did not accept Cain's work. 'The Lord respected Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering the Lord had no respect' (Genesis 4:4 & 5) and the Scriptures tell us Cain was wicked (1 John 3:12).

If we study what the Scriptures say in Hebrew, many people will be surprised. We need to remember, in Hebrew the nuances of English grammar and punctuation do not appear. This is word for word what the Hebrew Scriptures say about Nimrod written in Hebrew, and in Hebrew Nimrod is spelt, 'Nimrud'. "Cush he generated Nimrud ... He started to become of masterful in the earth. He became masterful hunter to faces of YHVH ... on so he is being said as Nimrud masterful hunter to faces of YHVH." That verse is very surprising. Nimrod was closer than just being before the Lord, he was literally face to face with God. To be face to face with someone means to be close enough to be within visual range. No wicked man can be face to face with God. The Hebrew word for face in these references is the plural word 'phnim', so Nimrod was in the 'phnim' of the Lord, literally face to face. To be that close is more than the Lord merely looking on and approving or disapproving of the person's actions. The relationship between the Lord and Nimrod appears to have been a very close one. There is a verse that infers Nimrod did begin with the blessing of the Lord. In English the verse reads: 'Cush was the father of Nimrod, he began to be a mighty one on the earth' (1 Chronicles 1:10). In Hebrew this verse says, 'Cush he generates Nimrud. Nimrud he started to become of masterful man on earth'. So Nimrod became a mighty man. The name 'Nimrud' means 'Upstart'. This is someone who has risen to a high position and is not afraid to get things done and when we read about Nimrod's achievements, he suits his name. The Scriptures do not say Nimrod was ever involved in the Babylonian religious cult. These accusations have been levelled at him but the Bible does not say those things.

The Scriptures are our guide and all Scriptures are inspired by God Himself (2 Timothy 3:16). If Nimrod had been as evil as people say he was and if he had behaved wickedly, or enticed millions of people to do wickedly, the Lord would have said so as He has in other Scriptures within the Bible about other people. To accuse Nimrod of wickedness for no other reason than because 'tradition' and myths or legends says he was wicked, is wrong. The Bible says, 'Do not listen to myths or legends' (1

Timothy 1:4) nor take notice of traditions of men (Colossians 2:8). Further to this, we have no right to accuse or judge anyone. Christian and secular writers are too quick to criticise Bible characters without searching the truth from, and cross-referencing the Scriptures. Almost everything written about Nimrod outside of the Bible is speculation and we cannot rely on old traditions or legends. We need to rely solely on the absolute truth of the Word of God. The only truth we have regarding Nimrod is written in the Bible and the Bible does not indicate he was wicked.

Nimrod was a significant Bible character. He was the first 'masterful' king on earth or in other words, a great leader. He was a masterful hunter. He mastered the art of hunting and that would have been to provide food for the people and to control the many dangerous wild animals. The Bible does not mention any other person who hunted in the presence of the Lord. As leader, Nimrod would have hunted down and killed the wild animals that could have harmed his people. Ancient kings did not sit in fancy palaces and give orders, they went out and protected their people, provided for them and fought wars for them. Nimrod was also a great Town Planner. He had several cities built including the great city of Nineveh, so here we have a great leader who fed and protected his people, and provided them with housing, education and a society in which to live.

Nineveh was such a huge city it took three days to travel from one end to the other and became only one of a very few Gentile cities visited by the Lord as recorded in the Scriptures. The people of Nineveh must have known a degree of righteousness at some point in the city's history, because at the spoken Word of the Lord via Jonah, the whole city repented and returned to God after many years of sin, idolatry and violence (Jonah 3:2 to 10). It is clear all of the people, including the king of Nineveh knew about the Lord, they believed in Him, they knew enough to obey His Word, repent, fast, humble themselves and be saved. That is more than many people in this modern world take notice of. We see in the Bible it was Nimrod who founded and originally built Nineveh so the knowledge of the Lord possibly came from Nimrod. Sadly, Nineveh did not remain repentant. It was eventually laid waste and became desolate (Nahum 3:7; Zephaniah 2:13), but the people of Jonah's generation who lived in Nineveh will be eternally blessed. Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, Someone greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32).

The ancient peoples did not value life as we do today. Their actions were warlike and hideously cruel, but because they were not famous like Nimrod was, their actions have mostly gone unrecorded in history. Other kings of that time in history did the most terrible things and the wicked actions of at least four of them have been attributed to Nimrod, even though the Bible tells us he was not in that area at the time. Then, just to make the legends fit Nimrod, he has been given at least four other names, yet Scripturally, he was only ever known as Nimrod. Some of the wicked deeds attributed to him happened long before he was born and long after he would have died. Nimrod would have battled viciously with other kings, violently fought for land, fought ferociously over his people but because his name is written in the Bible, he is being continuously vilified. We do not really know what Nimrod did or did not do, because we were not there! We need to keep an open mind about Nimrod because the Bible does not say he was wicked or righteous – just that he was a great man. We do not know if the Lord approved or disapproved of Nimrod because the Lord chose to keep silent on the matter. If we put aside all the myths written about Nimrod, Scripturally, what do we have left? A powerful, brave man who led his people, fed, protected and built cities for them, all under the watchful eyes of the Lord. 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord'.

Amen and God bless you.

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