

"Come on"-"Get out"

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In Genesis 11 we are given a glimpse of the descendants of Noah a century or two after the flood. The antediluvian age had been one of individualism, since as yet government had not been established. Liberty flourished, ending in license which developed into violence and corruption. Now government of an elementary sort had been established by God, as recorded in Genesis 9: 5, 6.

This being so, every man's hand was no longer against his fellow, and a new age set in marked not by individualism but by co-operation. Men discovered that what they could not achieve as solitary individuals could be accomplished if they clubbed together. Hence in verses 3 and 4 of Genesis 11, we find twice repeated an expression-"Go to," which in Darby's New Translation is rendered, "Come on." The Hebrew word means, "To give help," so that, if we today wished to stir up others to act together, "Come on," is just what we should say.

But basically the spirit of the postdiluvian age was the same as that of the antediluvian, only instead of each seeking the self-exaltation, of himself, so that "I" was the great word, all together were to seek the exaltation of the great "US." It was "Let US build US a city and a tower and let US make US a name." What the Apostle John calls, "the pride of life" (1 John 2: 16), was the dominating factor.

At this point God acted in a two-fold way. As Creator He knew the intellectual and inventive powers He had conferred upon man, and that acting independently of Himself, with the lust of self-exaltation, "now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Hence He confounded their methods of speech, which largely confused and hindered their confederation.

But the second thing He did came somewhat later, though it is recorded directly we commence to read chapter 12. To Abram He said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." This entailed separation of a very complete kind, inasmuch as idolatry had invaded the family out of which he was called, as Joshua 24: 3, 4, states. By the time he was called, the world-system had taken shape under the deluding power of Satan, and when men of the world were still saying "*Come on*," that they might accomplish their schemes, God said to him, "*Get out*."

Now this has ever been God's way. He separates His people from the world, that they may be for Himself. May we adduce a few more examples.

Take first the case of Abram's nephew, Lot. Here was a man who came out with Abram: a true saint at the bottom, for in the New Testament he is called "just [or, righteous] Lot;" though without that measure of faith that characterized his uncle. Hence, presently he drifted into the wicked city of Sodom, where their evil ways vexed his righteous soul from day to day. How different from Abram, yet when the hour came for the destruction of the city the angel's word was, "Hast thou here any besides? . . . bring them OUT of this places" So Lot had to say to them, "Up get you OUT of this place" (Gen. 19: 12, 14). They heeded him not, yet out he himself came, though like Job he might have to say, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth" (Job 19: 20).

The descendants of Abraham went down into Egypt, which for the moment was a place of security and plenty under the benign rule of Joseph. Presently it became to them the house of bondage. If in Abram's day we see the world-system as the seat of man's progress in combination, yet under the idols of Satan's creation; and in Lot's day we see it as the seat of vile corruption; in the day of Moses

we see Egypt as the world in its enslaving power, oppressing the people of God. Hence to Moses the word of God was, "I am come down to deliver them OUT of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them OUT of that land" (Ex. 3: 8). At that epoch Egypt was a splendid and attractive place, apart from the taskmasters, but it was no place for the people, if they were to worship God.

As we all know, though redeemed from Egypt, the people completely failed, falling persistently into idolatry under their kings until the captivity in Babylon took place. The predicted period having passed, under Cyrus a return to rebuild the temple was permitted, and we read, "These are the children of the province that went up OUT of the captivity" (Ezra 2: 1). Once more God called His people out, though only a few responded amongst the many. Once again tragic failure ensued, as we see in Malachi, so much so that when the Lord Jesus, as the promised Messiah, came He was rejected and crucified.

This brought things to a climax as the Lord Himself indicated in those wonderful words, recorded in John 12: 23-33. Referring to His being "lifted up," as the crucified One, He declared, "Now is the judgment of this world." This being the case, it should not surprise us that in this age of grace, which follows on His exaltation on high and the Spirit poured forth, the calling out of the world, of those who believe the Gospel should be strongly emphasised.

As regards Jewish believers, the Lord Himself announced it in advance. As the true Shepherd He entered the Jewish fold in the prescribed way, and amongst the sheep therein enfolded were some whom He called, "His own sheep." And what was His purpose in uttering His voice to them? Was it to stir them up to improve conditions in the "fold" and beautify it? NO. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them OUT." (John 10: 3).

But the Gospel has not been confined to Jews; it has gone forth to Gentiles also. This was quite a new departure in God's ways, and what was His purpose in it? In the early council at Jerusalem the Apostle James called attention to what had been declared by Simon Peter; namely that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take OUT of them a people for His name" (Acts 15: 14). So **that** is what God is doing today.

And have we Christians been true to this call of God? Alas, no. Very early in the Church's history believers forgot the nature of their calling and got entangled with the world as we see in the case of the Corinthians. They forgot, or perhaps they hardly yet realized, that there is no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial; between the believer and an infidel, between the temple of God and idols. The Apostle Paul instructed them that the saints of today are "the temple of the living God," and so the call to them was, "Come OUT from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6: 17). The world-system of today is no better than it was when the Apostle wrote these words, though there is a thin veneer of Christianity in English-speaking lands. We are certainly IN the world, as we pass on our pilgrim way; but we are not OF it, since we have been born OF God, and hence "the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not (1 John 3: 1).

From start to finish of the Bible God makes it plain that the saints, whom He owns, are to be separate from the world. This is a tremendous and far reaching fact. Let us each ask ourselves, How am I answering to it today?