

"Come on" and "Get out."

Genesis 11: 1-9; Genesis 12: 1-3; Genesis 13: 1-4; Hebrews 11: 8-10.

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If we trace back the present world-system to its source we arrive **at** the Tower of Babel. There it was like a trickling stream, now it is like the mighty Amazon at its mouth, bearing all kinds of craft on its bosom. Its ramifications are so immense today that we become lost if we attempt to understand it. If, however, we consider what happened at Babel we find things much simplified, yet with the essential features present.

We are not told much as to the age that preceded the flood. What we are told in Genesis 5 and 6 leads us to think that it was an age of fierce and aggressive individualism. No government had been established by God, and violence and corruption filled the earth. The post-diluvian age took on another character. Men awoke to the fact that they could achieve the desire of their hearts far more effectively by combination and co-operation. It was not that God was more in their thoughts, for they made no mention of His Name. It was merely that instead of laying all stress upon "I," they learned to substitute "us." "Let us build us . . . and let us make us a name.

The beginning of their enterprise was "a city," and the city was to be followed by "a tower." Now a city is not only an aggregation of dwelling-places, but also a centre of power and influence. When men build a city they establish themselves in the earth, and having once got firm hold for themselves they can extend their power further afield.

The significance of the tower may not be so apparent. It can hardly have been intended as a place of refuge should another flood come, since all the high hills had been covered in the flood that was so fresh in their minds. Personally I connect it with the fact that the idolatry that overran the ancient world had its origins at Babylon and that this terrible trafficking with the devil and his powers (which is what really lies behind idolatry), was usually carried on in some lofty place.

If confirmation of this is sought, let Numbers 23 and 24 be read. As long as Balaam was seeking enchantments, by getting into touch with his familiar spirit, he went to high places: "the high places of Baal," "the top of Pisgah," "the top of Peor." As soon as he abandoned the attempt to get into touch with the powers of darkness, he lost interest in these high places, and "set his face toward the wilderness." The tower of Babel was, I judge, a first attempt to get into touch with these supernatural powers, though it may have had uses besides this. Satan, we must remember, has no objection to helping men to make a name for themselves in independence of God, for it exactly suits his designs.

Now the building of a city and a tower whose top should be lifted into the heavens is a task beyond the ability of one man. It can be accomplished without much difficulty if men combine together. Hence combination became the order of the day. "Go to," they said, "let us build." "Go to," has a strange old-world sound in our ears. It is an expression that has gone out of use. The expression we should use today is, "Come on," and this is the rendering adopted in Darby's *New Translation*. "Come on," they said, "let us make brick." And again, "Come on, let us build." Until the Lord Himself ultimately said, "Come on, let us go down and there confound their language."

The diversity of tongues in the earth has been a great brake on the chariot wheels of human

progress. However, in spite of it men have combined as far as they could, and in recent times the idea of combination has been mightily revived. All knowledge and resources are being increasingly pooled and the world is moving with giant strides. Still the cry is "Come on!"

And that is the world's cry to you, my young Christian friend, and to me. Come on! it says; we have a bright idea; we have a good plan, we wish to abolish troubles. We wish to improve conditions. We want a happier world: a world where we can all enjoy ourselves more fully and for a longer time. You believe in good causes don't you? So do we! Ours is a good cause! Lend a helping hand! Join us! Come on! Come on! Come on!

"Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, *Get thee out.*" *WHAT? Get out?* Yes, "Get out."

Does that strike you as extraordinary? It should not. It is just what one might have expected. The post-diluvians were busy building a very nice world according to their own tastes — a world without God. Now God does not intend to be thus excluded, and therefore He took certain measures. First, He confounded their language and so upset their plans. Second, He began to formulate His own plan, and as a first step towards its ultimate accomplishment He called out one man, making him the depository of the promise, and the ancestor, according to the flesh, of the Messiah in whom the promise centred.

The world began saying, "Come on, come on!" God began saying, "Get out, Get out!" The world has not ceased saying, "Come on!" God has not ceased saying, "Get out!" to all who have ears to hear.

Abram's separation was very complete. He left "country" — i.e. his national surroundings; "kindred," — i.e. his social surroundings; "father's house," — i.e. his domestic surroundings. And when he left Ur of the Chaldees he did not know where he was going, as Hebrews 11 so plainly tells. A marvellous act of faith! No wonder he is called "the father of all them that believe," and "the friend of God." No wonder that God specially blessed him, and made him a fountain of blessing for all families of the earth.

Not only did God promise to bless him, but also to make his name great. This is very striking. The great object of the men of Babel was to make themselves a name. The ante-diluvian world had perished. They wished to achieve something that would perpetuate their names, as names of renown, whatever might happen to them. Have their names been perpetuated? Their names are utterly forgotten, though now at length men are digging to find the ruins of their cities.

When Abram turned his back on the splendid Ur of his day, his action must have appeared to be the height of folly to the men of his generation. "Why," they would say, "you are throwing away all your chances. You leave civilization and plunge into the unknown. No monument will ever be erected in Ur to perpetuate your distinguished name to future generations!"

Some four thousand years have rolled and the name of Abraham is remembered by hundreds of millions of human beings! Not only Jews, Christians, and even Mohammedans venerate his name. And for thousands of years all traces of the names of the builders of Babel and Ur have vanished. "Let us make us a name" was their cry, and they are totally forgotten. "I will make thy name great," said God; and the thing is effectively accomplished.

Still Abram might have said, "It is very nice to know that my name is to be great in connection with things to come; but what have I got for the present?" If he asked that question he very soon found the answer. The answer confronts us as we open chapter 13. He had a *tent* and an altar. His tent stood in sharp contrast to their city. They were out to establish themselves in the earth; to "dig themselves in" — if we may use a modern phrase. He had but a flimsy and moveable tent, the sign of his pilgrimage. His altar stood in sharp contrast to their tower. If they sought to the heights to get into touch with

spiritual powers of darkness, he had the lowly altar whereby he was maintained in communion with God.

Now here we have an indication of the immense compensation at the disposal of all those who have been called out of the world by the gospel today. Eternal blessing lies ahead, but communion with God is our privilege today. And think how much of God's mind and purpose has been revealed to us. God did not hide from Abram a certain thing which He was about to do, but let him into the secret. God has today let us into the secret of purposes which are immeasurably greater. By the side of his altar, outside Ur and Babel, Abram had a sight of things, utterly unknown in those great cities of man's construction. The believer of today who is in communion with God and separate from the world has the knowledge of things of which the world knows nothing.

Abram did have a sight of things far beyond his present surroundings. As Hebrews 11 tells us, he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The literal foundation of Babel and of Ur may have been all right: their moral foundations were all wrong. They were founded on human pride and power, and hence were doomed to destruction sooner or later. Abram wanted a city of divine construction founded on righteousness which is of God. That he looked for, and that he is going to get; for it says, God "hath prepared for them a city." In the light of that divine city the glory of Babel or of Ur was but a poor tinsel thing.

We have been called out of the world-system. Let us hold fast to that. "Get out," was God's word to us when we were converted, and never has He said, "Go back." As thus called out we have blessings, privileges and occupations which Abram never had. We have not less than he had but more. Blessed are we, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. That could not have been said of Abram. Our place is that of Sonship with the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts, and that Abram had not. We are called to take some part, however humble, in the great work of God's present grace in calling out a people for His Name and called to association with Christ in the coming day of His glory. No such evangelical mission was known to Abram.

Still we have what Abram had. We have a spiritual pilgrimage to pursue and we have a place of communion with God and of worship, while we journey. We are called out of the world, put *out of touch* with its systems and order of things, in order that we may be put *into touch*, and maintained in touch with God, and with His order of things which centres in Christ.

No one need have pitied Abram! He was a prince moving amongst paupers! And no one need pity the out-and-out, devoted, consistent unworldly Christian! Congratulate him the rather. He is spiritually enriched today. His name will be great in the millennial age, when the great world names of today are as forgotten as though they had never been. Pity the vacillating compromising, semi-worldly Christian, if you like, but not one of the Abram type.

Young people which is it going to be for us? How do we stand as to these things? The call of God has reached us in the gospel. Have we fully responded to it? Are our world-links cut? As the world continues to call us, saying, "Come on, come on!" do we turn our backs to its siren voice because we have heard the divine call, "Get out!"?

God grant that thus it may be for every one of us.