DID NIMROD BUILD THE TOWER OF BABEL?

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Introduction

The person and activities of Nimrod are highly debated among biblical scholars.[1] On the one hand, there is no consensus regarding his identity. Consequently, Nimrod has been identified as a Mesopotamian god,[2] a legendary Mesopotamian hero or eponym, a historical Mesopotamian or Egyptian king,[3] or simply a historic person.[4] On the other hand, some scholars believe that the activities of Nimrod were hostile and directed against God. They claim that the crowning evil act of Nimrod was building the Tower of Babel.[5] However, a critical evaluation of this claim reveals that it is not based on reliable foundations. Hence, in response to this, and using both biblical and nonbiblical data, this paper seeks to ascertain whether or not Nimrod built the Tower of Babel.

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[1]Peter Machinist, "Nimrod," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1116; Richard J. Clifford, "Nimrod," *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 759; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Baker (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 1:222; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 515-16.

[2]Kenneth Vaux, "How Do I Love Me?" *Christianity Today*, September 1985, 23; Machinist, 1116.

[3]W. Creighton Marlowe, "Nimrod," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 966. Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, "The People of the Old Testament According to Genesis 10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1997): 17.

[4]Bruce C. Birch and Ronald K. Harrison, "Nimrod," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, completely rev. and reset ed. (1979-88), 3:538; Machinist, 1116.

[5]André Parrot, *The Tower of Babel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 36; S. Bliss, *Analysis of Sacred Chronology* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn, 1995), 54; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 338; "Babel" (Genesis 11:9), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-80), 1:286; Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery," *The Christian Century* 119 (2002): 38; Machinist, 1117.

Biblical Arguments

Some who argue that Nimrod was an evil man who built the Tower of Babel base their arguments on linguistic and thematic considerations found in the Bible. We will consider each in turn.

Linguistic Considerations

The first linguistic consideration employed in the characterization of Nimrod is the meaning of his name. Despite the fact that the etymology and meaning of the name Nimrod is not known,[6] some scholars surmise that it means "we shall rebel," as derived from the root *mrd*, "rebel,"[7] or "revolt."[8] As such, a negative quality is attributed to the person and activities of Nimrod. Gordon J. Wenham suggests that this meaning possibly anticipates the rebellion of Gen 11:1-9.[9] S. Bliss points out that Nimrod is supposed to have been the leader of the rebellion that built the city with a tower in Gen 11:1-9, since his name signifies "the rebellious."[10] As a result of these claims, a connection has been made between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel.

However, some scholars reject the negative attributes attached to Nimrod based on the meanings above. Henry Snyder Gehman says that the name Nimrod apparently "is a 2d component of a theophoric name, of which the 1st part is omitted."[11] If this view is correct, then it suggests that the name was intended to be a positive name, glorifying Yahweh, instead of rebelling against Him. Also, Yoshitaka Kobayashi points out that although the name Nimrod may mean "we shall rebel" or "let us rebel," his movement can be understood as a "religious movement approved by God like in the case of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:22,30), or Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7). Jehu rebelled against Jezebel, and Hezekiah rebelled against the Assyrian king."[12] In this sense, Nimrod's rebellion was not directed against God, but against ungodly authorities or religious movements.

[6]Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB)*, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius [1980], s.v. *"Nimrōd."*

[7]Ibid.

[8]William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, based upon the lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (1986), s.v. *"mrd."*

[9]Wenham, 222.

[10]Bliss, 54.

[11]Henry Snyder Gehman, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), s.v. "Nimrod."

[12]Yoshitaka Kobayashi, "Historicity of Nimrod in Prehistory," Syllabus for OTST 620 Old Testament Backgrounds, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2003.

Based on the foregoing arguments, it seems that the meaning of the name does not provide very concrete support for evaluating the character and activities of Nimrod. It is therefore cogent that other considerations be made in order to determine the validity of the claim that he built the Tower of Babel.

The second linguistic consideration employed in the characterization of Nimrod is the meaning of the expression *liphnê *ᵃdonai* "before the Lord," in connection with the integrity of Nimrod's activities in relation to Yahweh in Gen 10:9, where Nimrod is presented as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." There is a plausible source for the negative meanings attributed to both *liphnê* and the overall activities of Nimrod. Perhaps this stems from the LXX rendition of the Hebrew *liphnê* as *enantion*. Generally used as an adjective, it means "falsely (reverse), contrary, opposing, in the presence of,"[13] "hostile,"[14] or "against."[15] The hostility and opposition implied in the various nuances of *enantion* perhaps explain why Nimrod is identified as the builder of the Tower of Babel even as early as Philo and Augustine.[16]

However, several scholars believe that *liphnê* in Gen 10:9 has a positive and favorable meaning. For instance, Francis Brown says that *liphnê* means "in the sight (estimation) of" or "before."[17] According to Victor P. Hamilton, it means "under the eye of . . . in full view of . . . at the disposal of."[18] Bruce C. Birch and Ronald K. Harrison hold the view that *liphnê* means "in accordance with the will of."[19] Kobayashi argues that *liphnê *ᵃdonai* "may be understood in a good sense as 'blessed of (Yahweh).' "[20] Derek Kidner says that "there is warmth in the reiterated *before the Lord*, marking God's estimate of [Nimrod's] skill— it is more than a mere formula."[21] Alan Richardson insists that Nimrod had the knowledge of God

[13]James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1980), s.v. *"Enantion."*

[14]G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (1976), s.v. *"Enantion."*

[15]Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (1988), s.v. *"Enantion, Enantios."*

[16]K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, "Nimrod Before and After the Bible," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 17-19. Cf. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 366-67.

[17]*BDB*, s.v. *"Pāneh."*

[18]Victor P. Hamilton, *"Liphnê," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 2:728. Cf. Harry F. van Rooy, *"Pānîm," The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:638. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 339, believes that Nimrod's power "is a gift of God's grace." He argues further that "the Persian king Cyrus is not the only pagan king whom Yahweh guided, even though the king knew not Yahweh."

[19]Birch and Harrison, 3:537.

[20]Kobayashi, 2.

[21]Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 107.

and "lived consciously"[22] in His presence. He also points out that this implies that the knowledge of God persisted in the first generation of people after the Flood, even among non-Semites. In his estimation, in later times after Nimrod, the people of Babylon and Assyria became cruel, oppressive and arrogant against God and His people because they forgot "the knowledge of God which Nimrod possessed."[23] John Hargreaves argues that Nimrod "hunted 'before the Lord', even though he was not an Israelite or a Semite. God chose certain Semites as His special workers and messengers; but Nimrod the Hamite is a sign that God's care was over all nations. It is so still."[24]

Claus Westermann and Wenham share the belief that *liphnê ʾadonai* in Gen 10:9 has a neutral meaning, pointing out that Nimrod's activities stood out as remarkable. It does not imply God's approval or disapproval of his activities.[25]

Although various shades of meaning of *liphnê* include "against" and "to confront,"[26] the preponderance of evidence indicates that it is not necessary to render *liphnê* negatively in terms of opposition. Indeed, the MT suggests neither a sense of hostility directed against God by Nimrod nor a link between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel.

Thematic Considerations

Two thematic links between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel are rebellion and the name Babel itself. Both are based on Gen 10:8-12 and 11:1-9. Concerning rebellion, some observe a link between the assumed meaning of the name Nimrod, "we shall rebel" (10:8-9), and the rebellion that actually instigated the building of the Tower of Babel (11:1-9). On this basis, Nimrod is identified as the architect of the Tower of Babel. For example, André Parrot observes that although Nimrod was a mighty man, not all his mighty deeds were beneficent. He attributes the construction of the Tower of Babel to him on the ground that he incited the people in rebellion to erect a tower for protection, should God decide to destroy humanity a second time, in a new Flood.[27] Moreover, Hamilton says that Nimrod is pictured "as the one who led the people in rebellion against God"[28] hence, the builder of the Tower of Babel.

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[22]Alan Richardson, *Genesis 1-11* (London: SCM, 1953), 120.

[23]Ibid.

[24]John Hargreaves, *A Guide to the Book of Genesis* (London: SPCK, 1977), 66. Cf. Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. Don F. Neufeld, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8 (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1979), s.v. "Nimrod."

[25]Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 75; Wenham, 223.

[26]*BDB*, s.v. "*Pāneh*." Cf. Holladay, s.v. "*Pāneh*."

[27]Parrot, 36.

[28]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 338. Cf. Machinist, 1117.

Admittedly, it was rebellion that fomented the building of the Tower of Babel. Kenneth Mulzac observes that,

> Gen 11:1-9 decries the disobedience and evil of those who, in apparent defiance of God's promise not to destroy the earth (8:21), were determined to build a great city, a great tower (of Babel), and a great name (11:4). By this action, they 'attempted to defy God . . . , so making themselves as powerful as God himself (11:6).'[29]

However, he does not in any way link the building of the Tower of Babel to Nimrod or any individual as such. This perhaps stems from the fact that there is no strong biblical proof to support that Nimrod either rebelled against God, built the Tower of Babel, or instigated its building.

Concerning the name Babel, there is an apparent thematic (and perhaps linguistic) link between Babel in Gen 10:10 (MT *Bābel*; LXX *Babulōn*)— the first center of Nimrod's kingdom or empire— and Babel in Gen 11:9 (MT *Bābel*; LXX *sugchusis*), the name of the place where the tower was built. Both were located in Shinar.[30] Based on this seeming similarity, Babylon or Babylonia has been equated with Babel, the place where the tower was built and language was confused.[31]

An analysis of this purported link reveals an interesting feature. Although the MT consistently reads *Bābel* (Babel or Babylon),[32] in both Gen 10:10 and 11:9, the LXX reads *Babulōn* (Babylon)[33] in 10:10 and *sugchusis* (confusion, commixture)[34] in Gen 11:9. The LXX reading in Gen 11:9 appears to be an explanation of what happened namely, Babel (confusion), at Babel (Babylon) the geographical location according to 10:10. This does not place as much emphasis on the name of the place (Babel or Babylon) as on what happened there (confusion, and consequently, dispersion).

Furthermore, Kobayashi sees a similarity between the Nimrodic movement and the Ubaid culture. According to him, Nimrod's kingdom began in southern Mesopotamia and expanded northward. Likewise, the Ubaid culture, which was the

[29]Kenneth Mulzac, "The Theological Character of Gen 1-11 (The Primeval History)," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 3 (2000): 39. Cf. P. J. Harland, "Vertical or Horizontal: The Sin of Babel," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 526; R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 3.

[30]Cf. Gen 10:10 and 11:2, 9.

[31]Dale S. DeWitt, "The Historical Background of Genesis 11:1-9: Babel or Ur?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 (1979): 15-17; Harland, 521-23.

[32]*BDB*, s.v. "*Bābel*." So too Holladay, s.v. "*Bābel*."

[33]Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (1994), s.v. "*Babulōn*."

[34]Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones (1992), s.v. "*Sugchusis*." Cf. Friberg and Friberg, s.v. "*Sugchusis*;" Louw and Nida, s.v. "*Sugchusis*."

first to rule the entire area of Mesopotamia, began in the south and expanded toward the north. It was a movement based on a strong religious conviction that destroyed idols and images. It was not known for building towers unlike its successor, the Uruk culture, that was noted for building very high towers. Kobayashi also believes that although the founder of the Ubaid culture (Nimrod?) possibly established his kingdom in the south, it expanded toward the north about 500 years afterward.[35]

Moreover, a careful study of the chronology of Gen 10 indicates that the language confusion of Gen 11 occurred after Nimrod, not during his time. Nimrod was the son (or descendant) of Cush and a grandson of Ham (Gen 10:8), long before Peleg who was born when the earth was divided (Gen 10:25). If the division of the earth here is taken to mean the dispersion that resulted from the building of the Tower of Babel,[36] it becomes obvious that this happened when Peleg was born, long after Nimrod.[37]

In the light of these observations, it is possible that Nimrod's kingdom was established at Babel, long before the building of the tower. However, as his kingdom continued to expand under his successors, the people rebelled against God and built a city with a tower at Babel, but not directly under the rule of Nimrod. This suggests that Babel (Gen 10:10) was already a geographical place existing long before the building of the tower (Gen 11:9). Given this and the fact that "the Bible itself nowhere specifically states that Nimrod had an evil character,"[38] it is not certain that the building of the Tower of Babel can be traced directly to the rule and activities of Nimrod.

Nonbiblical Arguments

K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst observe that since the Bible (especially Gen 10:8-12) contains scanty information about Nimrod "post-biblical tradition has added supplementary details that cannot be found in the biblical text, however much they may be presented as results of exegesis of this text."[39] They also note that it is not known exactly "when post-biblical speculation about the enigmatic hunter began to develop."[40] Peter Machinist also observes that in most

[35]Kobayshi, 1-4.

[36]Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 146. So too David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, ed. J. A. Motyer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 174.

[37]Even though Cassuto, 145-46, attempts to establish a link between Nimrod (Gen 10:8-12), the Generation of Division (Gen 11:1-9), and the cities they constructed, he makes a clear distinction between the two eras.

[38]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 22.

[39]Ibid., 1.

[40]Ibid., 16.

of these post-biblical sources, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, Nimrod has been negatively singled out "as the greatest sinner since the Flood."[41]

Jewish Sources

Philo of Alexandria has been identified as the foremost Jewish writer who explicitly mentions Nimrod by name in his writings around the first half of the first century C.E. He presents a negative image of Nimrod the hunter.[42] Pointing to Nimrod's Hamitic roots, Philo remarks that Nimrod should be translated as "Ethiopian," that is "the black one, because he has no participation in light."[43] In his typical allegorical manner Philo further remarks that,

> Ham, Nimrod's grandfather, stands for evil and that Ham's son Cush stands for 'the sparse nature of earth' and is a symbol of unfruitfulness and barrenness. Nimrod is Cush's son because spiritual unproductiveness can only produce giants, i.e., people who honor earthly things more than heavenly things. 'For in truth he who is zealous for earthly and corruptible things always fights against and makes war on heavenly things and praiseworthy and wonderful natures, and builds walls and towers on earth against heaven. . . . For this reason it is not ineptly said, 'a giant before (*enantion*) God,' which is clearly in opposition to the Deity. For the impious man is none other than the enemy and foe who stands against God.'[44]

Also, Philo comments on Gen 6:4 saying that when the sons of the earth deserted God by succumbing to the instinct of the natural flesh contrary to reason, "it was Nimrod who began this desertion . . . his name means 'desertion' (*automolēsis*)."[45] Nimrod is thus portrayed negatively.

Four main issues stand out in these views expressed by Philo: first, he attempts to connect Nimrod with the story of the giants in Gen 6 as well as with the building of the Tower of Babel. This connection lacks foundation, especially in view of the fact that only Noah's family repopulated the earth after the Flood in Gen 6-9, and there is no link between Noah and the giants in the Bible. Second, Philo interpreted Nimrod negatively to mean desertion. This too is the product of his allegorical approach to biblical interpretation. Third, he called Nimrod an Ethiopian, a negative characterization that is not found at all in the biblical text. Fourth, he maintains that Nimrod directed his activities against God by giving *enantion* an exclusive interpretation as "against." This exclusive and overstretched

[41]Machinist, 1117.

[42]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 17.

[43]Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesin* 2.81-82, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18.

[44]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 17-18.

[45]Philo, *De Gigantibus* 65-66, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18.

interpretation is not necessary since *enantion* has other shades of meaning including "in the presence of."[46] Moreover, there is no explicit indicator in Gen 10:8-12 that provides the basis for such a negative interpretation.

Apart from Philo's writings, which contributed immensely to the haggadic developments on Nimrod,[47] the midrashim also contributed to the misrepresentation of Nimrod and his activities. According to Devora Steinmetz, the midrashim capitalized on the Hamitic root of Nimrod to a large extent. They indicate that "the promise of creation was misappropriated by Ham and Nimrod and then by Esau, his spiritual descendant. Only in Jacob's time is that original promise redeemed through Shem's descendant."[48] They also claim that the coat which God made for Adam was illegitimately taken from Noah by Ham. Later, Nimrod took the coat from Ham and eventually it was passed to Esau. However, Rebecca later took this coat from Esau and clothed Jacob with it so that he will receive the blessings from his father, thus restoring the blessing promised at creation, to Shem's line.[49]

Josephus also presents Nimrod in a negative light with his claim that Nimrod incited the people on the Plain of Shinar to display insolent contempt for God. According to him, since the people did not trust God's plan for them to disperse and fill the earth, Nimrod

> persuaded them to attribute their prosperity not to God but to their own valour . . . [and] threatened to have his revenge on God if he wished to inundate the earth again, for he would build a tower higher than the water could reach and avenge the destruction of their forefathers.[50]

It may be possible that Philo's writings influenced Josephus.

Non-Jewish Sources

The result of Philo's (and perhaps Josephus') views on Nimrod and his activities is far reaching. They paved the way for promoting the negativity against Nimrod, extending from the Church Fathers to the present. For example, St.

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[46]Moulton and Milligan, s.v. "*Enantion*." It should be noted that Philo lived in Alexandria where the translation of the LXX took place. It may be that Philo popularized the negative interpretation of the LXX *enantion*.

[47]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18, 29. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 338, says that Nimrod is pictured in *Hag*. 13a and *Pes*. 94b as "the prototype of rebellion, the builder of the Tower of Babel, and as the one who led the people in rebellion against God."

[48]Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 199.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Josephus, *Antiquitates* 1.113-14, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 20-21. Cf. "Babel" (Gen 11:9), *SDABC*, 1:286.

Augustine's comment on the expression "before the Lord" (Gen 10:9) shows that he is aware of the multiple meanings of *enantion*. In spite of this, he claims:

> Some interpreters have misunderstood this phrase, being deceived by an ambiguity in the Greek and consequently translating it as 'before the Lord' instead of 'against the Lord.' It is true that the Greek *enantion* means 'before' as well as 'against'. . . It is in the latter sense that we must take it in the description of Nimrod; that giant was 'a hunter against the Lord.' For the word 'hunter' can only suggest a deceiver, oppressor and destroyer of earth-born creatures. Thus he, with his subject peoples, began to erect a tower against the Lord, which symbolizes his impious pride.[51]

This shows that Augustine believed that Nimrod acted "against" God and led the people to build the Tower of Babel, based on his arbitrary and exclusive interpretation of *enantion*.

This view survived into the medieval period. It was so obvious that it began to appear even in paintings. A typical example of this is the painted panel attributed to Jan Swart (1470-1535), preserved in Venice. Parrot's association of Nimrod with the construction of the Tower of Babel is based on the inscription on this painting.[52] Incidentally, his description of Nimrod mirrors Josephus' views stated earlier,[53] indicating that both Philo's and Josephus' negative views of Nimrod have come a long way in history and in biblical interpretation.

Finally, some modern scholars attribute the building of the Tower of Babel to Nimrod by equating the Babylonian Dynasty with Babel (or Babylon) built by Nimrod (Gen 10:10) on the one hand, and the ziggurat or temple tower with the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:3-5) on the other hand. For instance, Dale S. DeWitt believes that the Tower of Babel is "the ziggurat of the lower Tigris-Euphrates basin."[54] N. M. Sarna holds the view that the famous temple tower of Marduk, built during the First Dynasty of Babylon, qualifies for the Tower of Babel.[55]

Inasmuch as the name Babylon may be common to one of Nimrod's centers as well as the Babylonian Dynasty and Empire, equating either one, or both, with the location of the Tower of Babel is inconsistent for three main reasons. First, the towers in Babylon and the tower at Babel had different purposes. The towers in Babylon were erected for the purpose of worship. Such was the case with Marduk's temple tower and the Etemenanki. On the contrary, the Tower of Babel, according to the biblical text, had the purpose of keeping the people together, to prevent scattering, and was not related to worship.[56] Second, the founding of the First

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[51]Augustine, *Civ. D.* 16.4, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 19.
[52]Parrot, 36, n. 1.
[53]Ibid.
[54]DeWitt, 15.
[55]N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 85.
[56]Harland, 529.

Dynasty of Babylon occurred around the middle of the nineteenth century B.C.E., which is later than the time of the building of the biblical Tower of Babel.[57] Consequently, the Bible story of the Tower of Babel "had nothing to do with later Babylon except that in the sequence of kingdoms and civilizations Babylon replaced Sumer in the same general region."[58] Third, the tower of Babel is not the same as any of the Sumerian ziggurats. The ruins of the Tower of Babel have not been found.[59]

Conclusion

On the basis of the linguistic and thematic considerations from the Bible, as well as the nonbiblical arguments presented in this study, the claim that Nimrod built the Tower of Babel does not appear to be feasible. This is evident in view of the fact that the Bible does not portray Nimrod negatively. Further, it was the postbiblical sources, based mostly on speculative traditions, that portrayed Nimrod with the negativity that has persisted up to the present. Therefore, it is unsafe to conclude, based on nonbiblical sources, that Nimrod's activities were hostile and directed against God or that he built the Tower of Babel.

[57]DeWitt, 17.
[58]Ibid., 18.
[59]"Babel" (Gen 11:9), *SDABC*, 1:286-87.