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Bishop Festo Kivengere

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2013-10-01

The Tower of Babel

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Author: Festo Kivengere

Place: Rotary Club

Date: 1972

Event: Rotary Club Luncheon Meeting

Theme: The Tower of Babel

Text: Genesis 11

Note: Side B (transcribed from tape No.111)

Prog.#130: JESUS CAME TO BRIDGE BROKEN DOWN
COMMUNICATIONS

Time: 10:30

JESUS CAME TO BRIDGE BROKEN DOWN COMMUNICATIONS

It is a tremendous joy and I consider this a privilege. I must say thank you much. Well, it's a great joy for me to be here.

Well, now, what I want to share with you what most men everywhere in the world are seeking. What is it that humanity is after all this time?

May I use a very simple Biblical illustration written for us. This book old as it is, is a remarkable book as far as I am concerned. There is an incident recorded in the 11th chapter of the first book of the Bible.

There is recorded the first council ever. And also in that chapter is recorded the first motion ever. And so you have got the first city council and the first motion and resolution passed by a group of gentlemen. But anyway, they seem to be after something that we are all after. So we belong there.

There was a place called the plain of Shinar. And the group of men came and settled in this beautiful Shinar plain. As soon as they settled, they were very successful. They established the first community and the first social group which developed into a city. The problem of course which faced this group was security. And we are still facing it all the time.

And the second problem which they faced was communication. And we are still facing it at the present time. And you know we read here, they had their council meeting which is the first that is recorded in the Bible. "Come, they said, "Come, let us do something about it." It says here, "Come let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly."

Technology, you see. And they had bricks for stones. The stone was natural bricks made by man, industry. Absolutely progressive. You couldn't have a better group of men with industry in their hands.

After they had gone through the technical side of things and gathered their materials then they said, "Come let us build ourselves a city. And the city must have a tower." And the tower, the skyscraper, you know in New York type thing, or London. Must go right high so that anyone standing in the vicinity and looking at the landscape and the skyline will see this tremendous tower. They said, let us make ourselves a city, let us have a tower in the city which will be very high.

And the purpose is, that we may not be scattered upon the face of the earth. We want to be secure. Secondly, that we may have a name for ourselves. We want to be known. Security and fame. Two things which are with us all the time. But I forgot to tell you one thing.

The introduction says, "In those days there was one language and few words. I wish that was the case now. This is what is written here. In those days there was one language and few words. Of course we know we can't communicate without words.

There was one language in those days and few words. The more words we have in order to make our communication better, it seems they have confused us a little bit more. These people here had one language and few words so they started the committee and you can see it was not very difficult. They used one language the words were few and the work was more. So these people started a committee or council with one language and few words. And they communicated beautifully.

But something went wrong. And we read, he says, "God looked down and said to the council in heaven, "You know they are going to really

build the city. You know, they really are going to make a tower. And you know they are so united that they would do anything." Let me just read, "Behold they are one people, united, and they have one language. They can communicate, and this is only the beginning of what they will do." It is as if God was saying, they will even ultimately get to the moon. And nothing they proposed to do will be impossible unto them. They really are determined to do something, they are going to do it, you know. These people have got tremendous gifts, I know it. God says, "I'm not ignorant." Of course some people think, is He jealous? Is he scared of our scientific achievements? Is he scared that we are going to be so powerful that in the end we are going to storm heaven climbing on our tower? Not a bit. This is not what God is saying here. He is not scared of our technology because He knows all comes from Him. What God is saying is the whole council, the whole business, the whole problem has lost its center. It is now a self-centered community. The tower is that we may make ourselves a name. The city, is that we may not be scattered but that we may center round our city. Brickshave become the center. The tower the unifying achievement and the society has completely lost its bearing. And from that time judgement come upon that society.

Immediately as it is put in the written Scripture, God says, now that they have actually pushed me out of the Center of society and out of the center of progress and out of the center of the unifying element, judgment comes and they are going to be confused. Let us go and scatter. We are going to confuse their language. That's why we have many languages.

The problem of communication--because God is not in the center, man has broken down his communication between him and God and when man's communications with the headquarters break down, what happens? He can't

communicate with another man. They use words of course, I mean, we are still using words and words are flowing. And books are being written. But we don't communicate. Even in one language, we don't communicate.

But you see, words are not the only means of communication. Words are the expression of communication. The deep foundation of communications is when man has got a criterion upon which he can meet another man. And that criterion is God to whom they owe their humanity. You push God out they remain human beings but with a kind of hollow inside. They lacked the center. They missed that on which they can base their words, their sentences, their cultures so that they can communicate. Communications has broken down between man and headquarters and therefore, between man and man. What is the result? Then you say, I don't communicate with that African because he is African. And then, the African says, I can't communicate with that Englishman because he is Englishman. And because he is an American and because he is a Chilean. And because he is so Chinese. That's not true. That I am an African should never create a roadblock. This is how you can meet me. If you want to meet me, you have to meet me on the grounds that I am an African. And if I am going to meet an American, I am going to meet this American on the ground that he is an American. That fact, that I am an African, instead of creating a barrier which stops me from communicating, it should be a gift by which we can communicate.

And I want to tell you what happened at Shinar. The breakdown in communication, simply because the center had been missed and when the center is not God, man cannot understand man. Man becomes a shadow which threatens me. His color becomes repellant and repulsive. And you see we don't even meet in a church. But I want to tell you, my joy has

been, to meet humanity and I want to tell you, God took the initiative of which I am not ashamed.

God acted on that broken down communication. And he acted when he decided to become man in order to communicate. The whole business about Jesus is very simple. He did not come to create another religion, He simply came to become a communicant between man and man, man and God and then man and man when the vertical line of communication is expressed, established between man and God from whom He came, then the horizontal line of communication becomes natural between man and man. That's exactly what Jesus came to do. That's why our world is still a redeemable world.

Communication is our problem. Communication broke down when man pushed God from the center and man became a society without a center. And this is the business of the Good News that God has taken initiative to restore the communication between himself and man and between man and man. And our colors and our races and our languages should never be used as barriers but as bridges. A redeemed society uses its culture as a bridge by which to meet other people.

And christian churches too and denominations should be bridges upon which men can meet and understand each other. Not means by which they keep each other at arms length.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

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