

BUILDING A WORLD WITHOUT GOD

Genesis 4:15-24

Ravi Zacharias wrote a very probing and revealing book a couple of years ago entitled, Can Man Survive Without God? In this book he takes a look backward at the attempts to build a world without God, and then surveys what is going on in our world today. He reaches a convincing conclusion that man will never be successful in his attempts to build a world without God. He does not cite our text as proof of this thesis because his audience on university campuses would not accept the Bible as authoritative, but for us it is the very highest authority. Any issue can be settled for the Christian by simply discovering what the Bible says on the subject. This question is no exception. Our text is an inspired and trustworthy record of man's first attempt to build a world without God.

Man's first attempt to build a world without God began with the first human born naturally into the human family. After God pronounced judgement upon Cain for killing his brother Abel, Cain turned his back on the presence of God and moved eastward into the land of Nod. "Nod" has the root meaning of wandering. In the brief history that Moses gives us of Cain and

the culture that he attempted to put together, we can learn much about what happens when we try to build a world without God.

Anyone who knows anything about life in the United States of America at the close of the twentieth century knows that we are making a valiant attempt as a nation to build a world without God. Since the nineteen fifties we have been systematically attempting to remove any acknowledgment of God from our public life. The plan is to confine all acknowledgment of God to the private practices of individuals, but to make no acknowledgment of any dependence upon Him in any way publicly. We want no reference to God in public education. We want no evidence of God in public life, so even copies of the Ten Commandments must not be put on public display. No songs that make reference to the Deity can be sung or used in public. We want it known that we do not need God for the building of a safe and good world.

Unfortunately we are ignoring the experiences of those who have attempted this in the past. We act as though we were the first people to come up with the idea of a godless world, a religion free society. Actually the whole idea is as old as the human family. Let us go back to the trustworthy record of early human history to learn what happens when men build a world without God.

I. GOD WILL DISPLAY GREAT PATIENCE.

This is an amazing part of the inspired record---God gives a great deal of freedom to humankind, and will allow them to attempt to build a world without Him. He will allow life to move on at a normal pace in many ways: Cain and his wife began to have a family. This brings the ageless question concerning his wife---where did Cain get his wife? The answer is so obvious that I do not know how people have missed it. Obviously he married his sister. We should not conclude that Adam and Eve only had three children. God granted long life to those generations that lived before the flood, and this enabled them to birth many sons and daughters. The only ones listed in Genesis are those who are significant to the basic purpose of Genesis, which is to set forth the beginning of the human family, the impact that sin had on the human situation, how God reacted to that sin, and the plan He put in place to save humankind from the sin. It was never intended to be a complete record of the human family so the commonsense answer is that Cain married a sister. In the infancy of the race marriage to a close relative did not involve the dangers that it involves today.

However even though Cain decided to turn his back on God, God still allowed him to be a participant in his plan to fill up the earth with human beings. Even though he deserved the wrath of God upon himself and his

descendents, it was very slow in coming. God was extremely patient with man in his sin. Even after God decided that the sinful descendents of Cain had gone too far in their sin, He still waited for one hundred and twenty years before He sent the flood. O what a patient God we worship and serve!

II. MAN WILL SEEK SUBSTITUTES FOR GOD.

No sooner had Cain and his wife had a son than they began to try to escape the consequences of living a life without God. Their first substitute for God was to build a city. "Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch". By city we are probably to understand a community or village. Cain was looking to the city for what he had lost when he was expelled from the presence of the Lord.

1. He looks to human relations for security.

When Cain was expelled from the presence of the Lord, he lost the sense of security for his life that knowing God can give to you. There is something about knowing the living God, and having a relationship with Him, that fills the life with peace and security. If you lose that security, then you must look for a substitute for it. Cain's idea was that if he formed a community, he could look to the city to do what only God can do.

Cities and nations have continued to be a substitute for God through the ages. Usually when men attempt to build a world without God, they will

make human institutions, such as the state, a substitute for God. Modern history has provided two tragic examples of this. Hitler made the state the substitute for God in Germany and the world has been suffering from the effects ever since. Lenin and the founders of communism made the state a substitute for God in Russia, and you know the rest of the story. They took the whole world to the brink of annihilation.

2. He looked to human relationships for fulfillment.

Man was created to have a relationship with God. When that relationship is neglected, man is left with an inner void. The building of the city on the part of Cain should be seen as an attempt to fill this void. The spiritual loneliness that he knows may be overcome if he can have enough people around him.

Is it not interesting that the cities of our country have grown so much during this period of time in which we have been attempting to build a world without God. Being alone is to be avoided at all cost. We have migrated to the cities hoping that we can find in the city a relationship that will fill the God void in our lives.

Cain's substitute for God was in part the city which he named after his son Enoch. What is the predominant God substitute in our city, in our state?

III. DIVINE INSTITUTIONS WILL BE CORRUPTED.

God has given to humankind certain institutions for the good of man. The first of these institutions is marriage and the family. One sure consequence of attempting to build without God will be the corruption of these institutions.

The seventh son from Adam is the one in whom this corruption begins to manifest itself. As far as we know from the record Lamech was the first to introduce polygamy into the human family. "Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah." Lamech parallels Enoch in the righteous line of Seth. While on one side godliness was growing, and a man was taken to heaven without dying, on the other side corruption is reaching its climax. The corruption of marriage from the divine ideal should be seen as a part of the corruption, a consequence of building a world without God. Is it not interesting that in the communist attempts to build a world without God, the corruption of marriage has been evident. The Russian form of communism made a major attack upon the traditional family from the very beginning. In the Chinese expression of the same ideology there has been such an attack. Bold attempts are still being made to control how many children a Chinese family will have.

This is consistent with what we see in our country. Since we have decided as a nation to build a world without God, the traditional Christian concept of

family has been under attack. Divorce has become an accepted way of life.

We are into what can best be described today as serial marriages. It is just another form of the polygyny started by Lamech.

Who suffers when Divine institutions are corrupted? Those that the institutions were designed to serve---the whole family. Who is blessed when the Divine purpose in the institutions are pursued? Everyone! The whole society!

IV. HUMAN LIFE WILL BE DISCOUNTED IN VALUE.

Lamech is still the central character in the record. The seventh son also expressed the corruption of the age in another way. It is expressed in the first recorded attempt at poetry in the Bible. Lamech puts together a little poem which he recites to his wives that celebrates a new perspective on the value of human life. “Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

Evidently Lamech has had a conflict with some young man. In the confrontation the young man did some kind of physical injury to Lamech. In an arrogant act of revenge he killed the young man, and then wrote this little ditty about it. The ditty celebrates his arrogance and his disregard for the value of human life.

This should not surprise us. Violence is still a predictable result of seeking to build a world without God. I heard Ravi Zacharias reciting statistics just a few days ago about the violence that Europe has known in this century.

Most of them have been the result of man attempting to build a world without God. Hitler put to death at least six million Jews, not to mention the millions of others who died violent deaths through the war that he thrust upon the European continent. When you add to this staggering number, the millions that died under Stalin and the Russian rulers over the years of their rule, you begin to get a glimpse of the consequence of building without God.

It is noteworthy that there has been a tremendous increase in violence in our society during the years we have been attempting to build a world without God. Can you realize it? We now have armed policemen in almost all of our schools. We dare not have church here without security guards standing in their places. The homes of our country have become unsafe for human habitation. When will we learn what this ancient book is telling us---you cannot successfully build a world without God.

There is at least a survey of the lessons. The big question is will we do anything about it. Or will we just add another tragic chapter of the history of man's attempt to build without God? You may feel helpless to do anything

about it, but you can at least do one thing. You can at least declare like Joshua of old, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” You can be part of a significant minority that determines to give to God his rightful place in their lives and in their society. I want to invite you to break away from those who share the views of Cain and allow your life to make a difference in our world.