

SRC International

Biblical Reflections on Missions in Our Fields



The Babylonian Kingdom Built Upon the Spirit of the Tower of Babel

“God blessed them, and
God said to them,

‘Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the earth and subdue
it; and have dominion over
the fish of the sea and over
the birds of the air and over
every living thing that
moves upon the earth.’”

(Gen 1:28)

In 2006, after dedicating 24 years to Korean-American immigrant ministry, I stood on the cusp of engaging in overseas missionary work. During that transitional period, I was reading the Book of Daniel as part of my Bible reading plan. Previously, I had always seen Daniel as a collection of apocalyptic dreams and visions. However, given my impending missionary journey, Daniel's story suddenly resonated with me in a new way.

Daniel was taken as a captive to Babylon, where he lived for 70 years. Despite these hostile circumstances, he profoundly influenced the spiritual climate of the Babylonian Kingdom by embodying the values of God's kingdom. This struck me as a compelling account of what it means to be a missionary.

This realization was so powerful that I paused my ongoing nine-month Bible reading program and turned my focus toward an in-depth study of the Book of Daniel. I spent almost a year discerning God's perspectives on missions as revealed through Daniel's experiences. The insights I found became the cornerstone of my own work in conflict zones and laid the foundation for our newly established mission organization.

In the Jewish worldview, the Babylonian kingdom—the setting for the Book of Daniel—is often seen as an extension of the spirit of the Tower of Babel, as described in Genesis 11. According to this chapter, the people during that time, who all spoke one language, sought to build a city to prevent their dispersal and a tower "to make a name for

themselves.” Both ambitions ran counter to God's original intent for humanity, as mentioned in Genesis 1:28.

God had created human beings to fill and subdue the earth, yet these people chose to fortify themselves behind increasingly high and thick walls to resist dispersal. Additionally, human beings were created to reflect the image of God and to worship Him, but instead they aimed to ascend heavenward and make names for themselves. Both trajectories clearly contradicted the purpose of human creation as expressed in Genesis 1.

As a result, God descended into the city of Babel, confusing their language and putting an end to their ambitious projects. The people were scattered across the earth, just as God had originally intended. It was from this scattering that God chose Abram, the ancestor of Israel, to initiate a new history of salvation.

Through Abraham, God set forth a new trajectory of God's mission. Unlike the builders of the Tower of Babel and the pyramids, Abraham led a descending way of life, digging wells in the wilderness. Rather than constructing formidable walls to prevent scattering, he embraced a pilgrim lifestyle, pitching tents and continually moving from one place to another.

Daniel's Missional Paradigm in the Babylonian Kingdom

In Babylon, Daniel also pursued a descending way life as a pilgrim like his ancestors, exemplified in the following four types of missional spirituality.

First: Pilgrim's Spirituality

Throughout the Book of Daniel, it becomes clear that although Daniel lived in the heart of the Babylonian kingdom, he found his identity as a prophet of God. Although it must not have been easy to accept Babylon as his mission field, particularly after having witnessed the fall of Israel and the destruction of the temple, Daniel continuously meditated on the stories of his ancestors that God had revealed. Eventually, he might have found his story in the life of his ancestors, who had lived as pilgrims instead of building the Tower of Babel. This led him to a new identity not as a captive but as a missionary in Babylon.

Second: Mobile-Temple's Spirituality

Daniel lived during a dark time. He even saw that the Jerusalem Temple had been trampled and destroyed by foreign powers. However, he embraced dietary laws as an alternative form of temple worship,

“But Daniel resolved that
he would not defile
himself with the royal
rations of food and wine;
so he asked the palace
master to allow him not to
defile himself. Now God
allowed Daniel to receive
favor and compassion
from the palace master. ”

(Dan 1:8-9)

even rejecting the king's food and wine. Daniel's attitude resonates with Abraham, who built altars instead of towers or pyramids.

Third: Rejected-Stone's Spirituality

Daniel and his friends saw a vision that a rejected stone would crush Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and turn it into ash. This "Rejected Stone Spirituality" gave them the courage to defy a 40-meter tall golden statue. This episode underscores that the only way to triumph over the worldly values of the Babylonian kingdom is through the descending way of life, symbolized by the "rejected stone," Jesus Christ.

Fourth: Eschatological Spirituality

During King Darius' rule, a law forbade praying to anyone other than the king for 30 days. Despite this, Daniel continued to pray before God, facing Jerusalem three times a day. Although the Jerusalem Temple had long been destroyed, Daniel found courage in his eschatological visions of a heavenly temple descending from above and continued to pray before God. This apocalyptic spirituality resonates with Abraham, who "by faith... looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10).

Daniel's Missional Strategy Required Again in This Era

Seventeen years into my missionary journey, I find myself revisiting Daniel's four spiritual dimensions. Today's spiritual climate in conflict zones and Muslim-majority regions eerily echoes the Tower of Babel, perhaps more than ever before.



It's common knowledge that, in recent times, nearly all the oil-rich nations in the Middle East are vying to outdo one another in ambitious construction projects, some of which even dwarf the biblical Tower of Babel. For instance, the United Arab Emirates has transformed a

“As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” (Dan 2:34-35)

barren desert into Dubai, a city that serves as a global transportation nexus and number one travel destination in the middle east. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's crown prince has initiated the development of the fantastical Neom City, backed by the nation's substantial oil wealth. Following its successful hosting of the World Cup, Qatar is in the process of converting its entire nation into a smart city.

When viewed through the lens of God’s mission, this wave of the intense urban development engulfing Middle East could cautiously be seen as presenting new possibilities and opportunities for missions.

As it stands, these Middle Eastern oil-producing countries continue to adhere to a centralized, monolithic, and closed system, rooted in a monarchical governance structure. However, as these nations embrace ongoing intense urbanization, their societies might be transitioning from being closed to open, and from being uniform to diverse. This may very well open the doors for missions even wider.



Two Areas to Focus on: Turkey and Southeast Asia

I assert that significant progress has already been made in Turkey and Southeast Asia—both considered major epicenters for missionary work in Muslim-dominated regions. Singapore, which serves as a focal point in Southeast Asia, has evolved into a city-state that outshines even Dubai. The resurgence of Christian revival movements in countries around Singapore cannot be viewed as isolated incidents. In Malaysia, where Muslims make up 60% of the population, Christianity is experiencing consistent growth. Similarly, Indonesia,

where Muslims constitute 87% of the populace, has seen a steady rise in Christianity, ranking it third in Asia for its Christian population. These trends, I believe, are interconnected.

At this critical juncture, the mission God has set before us, who are vested in these lands, has become increasingly apparent. I contend that it aligns with the four facets of spirituality exemplified by Daniel: Pilgrim's Spirituality, Mobile-Temple's Spirituality, Rejected-Stone's Spirituality, and Eschatological Spirituality.

As I write the concluding chapter of my ministry, I am inspired to revisit and reclaim the four dimensions of spirituality that guided Daniel, and which I had initially embraced when embarking on my missionary journey in 2007. In the world that emulate the Babylonian kingdom through ambitious urban development and modern-day Towers of Babel, my goal is to dig the wells deeper and set up the tents wider. And within those tents, I intend to rebuild the Temple of Jesus in the heart of Babylon.

I dedicate my remaining term wholly to the Lord, guided by these four cornerstones of spirituality.

Blessings,

Brother Joseph Kim