

Who was Nimrod in the Bible?

Nimrod in the Bible was the great-grandson of Noah through the line of Ham and Cush (Genesis 10:8). What we know of him comes from four verses in Genesis:

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; so it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.” His kingdom began in Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, which is between Nineveh and the great city of Calah. (Genesis 10:8-12, BSB) There are other mentions of Nimrod in Micah 5:6, which refers to Assyria as “the land of Nimrod” and in 1 Chronicles 1:10, which includes his name in a genealogy.

In Genesis 10, Nimrod is called “a mighty warrior on the earth” (verse 8) and “a mighty hunter before the Lord” (verse 9a). So famous was Nimrod’s prowess as a hunter of wild animals that his skill became proverbial, and the ancients used to compliment people by saying, “This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world” (verse 9b, NLT).

Nimrod was obviously a mighty man with great skill and plenty of ambition. The fact that Genesis 10:8 calls Nimrod “a mighty one” (KJV) has led some to associate him with the Nephilim, which are called “mighty men” in Genesis 6:4 (KJV). This association, although untenable, has led still others to believe that Nimrod was a giant.

Many legends have sprung up around Nimrod. In Jewish legends, Nimrod promoted the worship of many gods and was the sworn enemy of Abraham, whom Nimrod tried to murder (see Genesis Rabbah 38:13). Islamic literature also teaches that Nimrod and Abraham battled one other (Qur'an 21:68-70; 37:97-99). Scottish minister and writer Alexander

Hislop claimed that Nimrod was married to Semiramis, a famous queen in the ancient world. All of this is speculation.

Equally unsubstantiated are the descriptions of Nimrod from Jewish historian Josephus, who links Nimrod to the building of the Tower of Babel: “[Nimrod] said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to reach. And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 4). So, the motive for building the Tower of Babel, according to Josephus, was to protect humanity against another flood. Further, according to Josephus, Nimrod “persuaded [his subjects] not to ascribe [their strength] to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness” (*ibid.*). Of course, construction of the Tower of Babel ended with another show of God’s power: the Lord confused the languages of the people, making it impossible for them to communicate effectively enough to finish the job.

Nimrod has lent his name to our vocabulary: today, a “nimrod” is “a hunting expert or devotee.” (And, for a brief time in the 1980s, nimrod was a less-than-heroic slang term for “geek” or “socially awkward person.”) Nimrod appears as a character in the mythology of many ancient cultures; he shows up in Hungarian, Greek, Arabic, Syrian, and Armenian legends. There is evidence that the Epic of Gilgamesh and the myth of Hercules both find their origins in Nimrod’s life. Nimrod was undoubtedly a powerful, charismatic hero-figure of the ancient world. It isn’t hard to see why so many myths and legends would spring up in the wake of such a man. In the end, however, Nimrod’s power and glory came to nothing, because God is stronger than even the mightiest of men, and He cannot be thwarted. Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord, but humility before the Lord is

the posture of the wise (Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).