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## Tall Buildings: How High Will They Go?

**L**EADERS of ancient Babel said: "Let us build a tower, whose top may reach into heaven." (Gen.11:4) They tried but didn't quite make it.

Mankind still is trying to build a genuine skyscraper and several times in this century it has appeared that buildings have been erected about as tall as a building ought to be. They're going higher.

Latest entry is an 82-story building for Houston that will be 1,400 feet tall, and topped by a 125-foot spire to emit light rays.

The 1,454-foot-tall Sears tower in Chicago remains the tallest but reports tell of plans to build one half again that high in New York and another almost twice as tall in Chicago.

Prior to invention of the airplane, the novelty of being able to view the countryside from a skyscraper was enough to make a building notable. Now most people might not be so impressed by tall buildings.

The high cost of land per square foot in downtown sections is given

as a reason for stacking offices layer upon layer. People working inside may pay little attention to their location, although the prestige of an address in a well-known tall building seems to have strong appeal.

The crush of workers and customers trying to gain access to several such structures near each other often generates costly transportation problems of mammoth proportions.

To avoid them Oklahoma City builders have scattered large structures all over town so that scores of trading centers have been established. Nevertheless, after years spent in demolishing old structures and erecting new ones, the downtown section is rising to new heights. Just imagine what Oklahoma City might be like if all of our tall buildings were situated in the downtown district!

Beauty does not seem to be a major consideration for all buildings. A world-famous architect recently visited downtown Oklahoma City and declared that a number of new buildings were "just terrible" from

the standpoint of architectural beauty.

If some citizens agree with him about the sterile appearance of glass towers this does not necessarily mean they would approve of what he might have built instead.

The Edmond City Council this month strengthened laws to deny building permits on aesthetic grounds. Probably most citizens would concur that ugly building should be discouraged but wait until a public meeting tries to decide what is ugly.

"Architects, like historians, interpret the times, but unlike writers of history, architecture records the social and economic values at the time of establishment," said Jack M. Graves, president of the Oklahoma section of the American Institute of Architects, awhile back.

That could imply a great deal about our cultural standards and ambitions. If the opinion prevails that the city with the tallest building is the greatest we might not stop with a building 200 stories high.