

Acts 2:1-13  
Genesis 11:1-9  
Are We Speaking the Same Language?  
WRCoB 6.5.22

First appearances might not show a connection  
Between our OT and NT Scripture Lessons.

But there is.

The passage from Genesis is the story of the Tower of Babel

At that time in history, the whole earth had but one language.

Humankind flourished.

The people, unified, made the decision to build a city  
And in it, a tower reaching the heavens.

God saw their intentions.

That united in one language and one task  
They could do wondrous things.

So wondrous, in fact, that their wondrous city  
Would be the center of their worship.  
Feeling no longer a need to rely on God.

And so, in response, God confused their language.

They could no longer understand each other.

The architects fought with the stone masons  
Who couldn't read the blue prints.

The stone masons fought with the laborers  
Who couldn't follow verbal instructions

And the laborers tried to unionize  
But the sound coming from their mouths  
Was just babble.

And their building enterprise came to a screeching halt.

God scattered them to the four corners of the globe  
Each with their own language.

And they named the place Babel

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Now we move forward many thousand years  
To an event recorded in the Book of Acts.

We go to where the disciples had gathered.

After Jesus rose from the grave  
And just before he ascended into heaven

He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit.

And so fifty days following Passover  
During a Jewish festival known as Pentecost

The Holy Spirit came down upon them in a mighty way.  
Not a gentle breeze but like the rush of a violent wind.

Filled with the Spirit, they started speaking.

People heard the disciples speaking their language.

How could these uneducated Galileans do that?

Sixteen different languages

And everyone understood as if it was one language.

See the connection?

It is Babel in reverse.

In the story in Genesis

God confuses the language and scatters the people.

In the Pentecost event

God brings people back together

Uniting them with the language of the Spirit.

How I wish that could happen again!

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The early chapters of Acts

Record the results of the Spirit's anointing.

First, it emboldened the disciples

Like nothing else did.

They were far more courageous

Than when Jesus was alive and by their side.

Peter, who denied Jesus  
Started preaching to the crowds  
Not holding back.

And the people were cut to the heart.

What should they do?

Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus  
That they might be forgiven  
And receive the Spirit.

3000 people were baptized.

All these people, young and old  
Rich and poor, black and white  
Different languages, different cultures

They all came together as the church.

They sold their possessions  
And distributed the proceeds  
To anyone and everyone in need.

They spent every evening after work  
Getting together, sharing their food  
With glad and generous hearts.

I mean, think about it!

**1 Acts 4:32 NLT All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.**

Can you imagine living like that?

An economic system sharing equitably among all believers.

Some would call it socialism or communism.

But, to me, the early days of the church  
Was a return to Paradise, back to the Garden, Utopia.

It was wonderful!

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So what happened?

This is the way I think about all this.

There is a title I like from a song by Jason Gray  
*Order, Disorder, Reorder.*

That's the way I see God working.

At the very beginning God created order out of chaos.

But the event in Eden created disorder.

Following the expulsion from Eden, God created reorder.

This cycle repeats itself over and over  
In the Bible's historical accounts.

*2 First the fall, and then the recovery from the fall, and both are the mercy of God. —Julian of Norwich*

Order, disorder, and reorder.

God sends Jesus as the Great Reorderer  
The Savior that, once and for all, reorders life.

The results are found in the life of the early disciples  
And the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Individually, God continues to reorder our lives  
From the disorder that we have created.

Continues to bless us with his Salvation and the Holy Spirit.

But what about the church?

Don't get me wrong  
The church has been a wonderful gift to humanity.

But it is fraught with division and disorder.

People mess it up.

It didn't take long for the newly established church  
To create disorder.

It is recorded in Scripture.

Much of the Apostle Paul and James' writings  
Addresses the disorder they see in the church.

And now today, the church is in trouble.

And, I suppose, not only the church  
But the greater society as well.

There is so much disorder in our world  
That we are in the midst of another Babel.

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Jonathan Haidt wrote an article in the Atlantic  
Published April 11, 2022 entitled

3  
*Why the Past 10 Years of American Life  
Have Been Uniquely Stupid*

In it, he writes

4  
*The story of Babel is the best metaphor I have found for  
what happened to America in the 2010s, and for the  
fractured country we now inhabit.*

5  
*Something went terribly wrong, very suddenly. We are  
disoriented, unable to speak the same language or  
recognize the same truth. We are cut off from one another  
and from the past.*

Humanity's hubris, our excessive pride and self-confidence  
Has once again caused fragmentation  
In our society  
In our politics  
And in our church.

Haidt blames much of the problem on social media.

**6** *It's been clear for quite a while now that red America and blue America are becoming like two different countries claiming the same territory, with two different versions of the Constitution, economics, and American history.*

**7**

*But Babel is not a story about tribalism; it's a story about the fragmentation of everything. It's about the shattering of all that had seemed solid, the scattering of people who had been a community.*

**8**

*It's a metaphor for what is happening not only between red and blue, but within the left and within the right, as well as within universities, companies, professional associations, museums, and even families.*

I would add the church.

I am torn in seeking to understand where we are in history.

We certainly are in the middle of a period of disorder.

Will it end with the Second Coming of Christ?

Will that be God's next phase?

Who knows?

**9**

**Matthew 24:36 NRSV** “**But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**”

There has been revival throughout the history of the church

God's reordering.

God's refreshing of the Holy Spirit.

I think the church needs a fresh anointing.

We need revival.

We need reordering.

The universal church no longer understands each other.

We no longer trust each other.

We no longer feel we need each other.

It is fragmented with two different churches emerging

Two different versions of what it means to be a Christian

It's the Tower of Babel all over again.

And like the Tower of Babel

God is in the midst of the disorder.

And if we are receptive to it

God will send the Holy Spirit

And reorder the church to its original intent.

And so, may we be open to the possibility

That God is in the midst of these turbulent times

Seeking change for the better.

And may we pray to God to revive the church of Jesus Christ

I close with my favorite prayer for revival in the church

By Charles H. Spurgeon.

*O God, send us the Holy Ghost. Give us both the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal. O thou who art our God, answer us by fire, we pray thee. Answer us both by wind and fire, and then we shall see thee to be God indeed.*

*The kingdom comes not, and the work is flagging. O, that thou wouldst send the wind and the fire! Thou wilt do this when we are all of one accord, all believing, all expecting, all prepared by prayer. Lord, bring us to this waiting state.*

*God send us a season of glorious disorder. O, for a sweep of the wind that will set the seas in motion, and make our ironclad brethren now lying so quietly at anchor to roll from stem to stern.*

*O, for fire to fall again, fire which shall affect the most stolid! O, that such fire might first sit upon the disciples, and then fall on all around!*

*O Spirit of God, thou art ready to work with us today even as thou didst then. Stay not, we beseech thee, but work at once. Break down every barrier that hinders the incoming of thy might! Give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach thy reconciling word, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*