

July 27-31, 2020 Edition

The "BIG Story" Of The Bible #9

Finding Jesus In The Old Testament

The Tower Of Babel- The End Of The Beginning

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we are going to be looking at one of the strangest stories in the entire Bible- the Tower of Babel. I have always wondered what the deal was with this story? Why does God care if they build a tower? Does God feel threatened by the people? I have never heard a lesson given on this story that made much sense (not that I've heard many- lessons on Babel that make sense that is) nor have I ever given a lesson on this story. This time as we started to go through the stories of the Old Testament once again I decided that I would change that and I'm so glad I did. From now on I have a new outlook on Babel- I freaking love this story now! I hope that I am able to illuminate the reasons why I love it so much as we spend the week together looking at this most ancient of stories. But before we get started with Babel let's reset how we got to Babel and the plain of Shinar (where this story takes place).

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Remember? It's only been 9 weeks since we talked about it. His great dream was to create a perfect world in which He would place His dearly loved children so that He could love and enjoy us forever and so that we could learn to love and enjoy Him forever. But it didn't take long before we broke God's dream (and His heart). We broke the one rule He had given us which was really not about the rule but about trust- would we trust Him? Nope. And ever since we've been carrying on the family tradition of believing we know better than God how to run our lives. So God comes down and pronounces His judgment. The serpent would be cursed. And I always thought God cursed Adam & Eve as well. But He doesn't. Yes, He tells them the consequences that will be associated with their decision to go their own way rather than trust God but the curse that should have fallen on them instead falls on the creation. And then God gives the Bible's first prophecy:

I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

In other words, you guys just incurred a debt you could never pay. So I am going to pay it for you.

The instruction to fill the earth still applies. God wants humans in every corner of this planet. Adam & Eve leave Eden (or does it leave them? More on that in a few days...) and start filling the earth with other humans. Cain and Abel are born. Abel has a heart for God and it shows in everything he does. Cain has a heart for himself and it shows in everything he does. They both make offerings to God but Cain's is not accepted. Rather than making Cain sad and leading him to ask where he went wrong it just makes Cain mad and God warns him:

"Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." Genesis 4:6-7 (NLT)

Rather than subduing sin and being its master Cain gives in to his anger and kills his brother. He is not sorry in the least. He IS sorry he got caught and he IS sorry he now has to leave the place where his family (and God) are. He leaves and goes to the east where he founds a city and as his line descends from him so does his spirit descend with them. The genealogy of Cain is filled with violence and oppression. But Genesis 4 ends with a light in the darkness- a reason for hope:

Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, 'God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.' Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.
Genesis 4:25-26 (NIV)

This is Moses giving all of us who are so discouraged by the direction the world is taking at the end of Genesis chapter 4 a gleam of hope. Yes- the world is a dark, violent and often oppressive place but God still has a foothold and His promise to send a rescuer who would make all things right is still on track even if it doesn't seem like it. But then comes Genesis chapter 9 and we are told that things are worse than ever:

The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. Genesis 6:5-6 (NLT)

Things are very dark but all hope is not lost. In Genesis chapter 5 we were introduced to that hope- a family line that does not embrace the narcissism that is expressed in the spirit of Cain but rather calls upon the Name of the LORD and so follows the spirit of Seth and Abel. Noah is a man who walks-with-God and is chosen to save the human race (in more ways than one). Yes he will be the only one (along with his family) to survive the flood but he will also continue the line of those who would call upon the Name of the LORD. But after the flood things start to go off the rails again. The genealogies of chapter 10 show us that there are some pretty messed up people (still) and that the spirit of Cain has not been washed away in the flood- it still persists.

And that brings us to Babel. Tomorrow we'll get started talking about the connections that I believe we're supposed to see when we look at the **BIG** story of the Bible for today maybe spend some time thinking about where you put your trust and whether you would consider yourself to be following in the spirit of the line of Cain or the spirit of the line of Seth/Abel as one who calls upon the Name of the LORD.

Tuesday Reflection: So- Babel. What a strange story, am I right? What is going on here?

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there. They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world." But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other." In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world. Genesis 11:1-9 (NLT)

So what exactly is going on here? Why is what the people did "bad"? Well let's start with God's initial instruction to Adam & Eve:

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it."
Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

Whether we can see it right now at this early point in the **BIG** story of the Bible- just about every theologian you ask will tell you God was telling Adam & Eve to build a city. We'll talk more about why they think that later but for now let's focus on the second part of God's instruction- fill the earth. He tells Noah's family the same thing after the flood:

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth."
Genesis 9:1 (NLT)

But rather than filling the earth what do the Babel builders do? They settle down together "otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Isn't that the whole point? Isn't that what God's plan was/is? Yes. So what's going on? The spirit of Cain is what's going on. It has survived the flood. Whatever the reason God felt it was necessary to send the flood and start over again with only Noah and his family it must not have been to rid the spirit of Cain from this planet because here it is again. And who is it showing up in? A guy named, Nimrod:

Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. Since he was the greatest hunter in the world, his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world." He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. From there he expanded his territory to Assyria, building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah). Genesis 10:8-12 (NLT)

The Bible doesn't tell us much about this guy other than he was a great warrior but this verse does give us a clue about the identity of the leader of the Babel builders. The one who built the city of Babylon. Jewish tradition teaches that Nimrod was a rebel (in fact his name means one-who-rebels) and a killer. He was violent and oppressive and took the spirit of Cain and ran with it. This has nothing to do with our lesson but one story about Nimrod from Jewish tradition is that he inherited Adam's suit of clothes which God has made for Adam when they left Eden. A suit of clothes that would never wear out (so what happened to it after Nimrod? More on that when we get to Jacob & Esau so make sure and tune in then ;o) and made him powerful beyond all human comprehension. He used that power to promote his agenda of violence and oppression and at Babel he used his influence to attempt to build a tower that would allow him to storm heaven itself.

Why? Well, why do humans do anything? Lots of reasons you might say and you'd be correct but trace all of those reasons to their ultimate source and you'll find the same thing- a desire for what the Jews call, Shalom. Shalom is a word that is very much like the Hawaiian word, Aloha. Shalom can be a hello or a goodbye. It is a spirit that seeps deep into the human heart and is the feeling one experiences when all is right with the world. All is right and there is peace between me and God, me and others as well as me and myself. It is the driving force behind everything we do for good or for bad. Paul explains it like this:

If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:7 (NLT)

If I do what? What do I have to do? Well, ultimately it comes down to who do you trust to guide you to a place of Shalom? God or yourself or someone else? Nimrod and the Babel builders were going to attain heaven (and ultimately Shalom) by the force of their own collective wills. And it didn't go well for them. We'll look at some interesting connections between this story and the rest of the **BIG** stories of the Bible in the coming days but for today maybe spend some time thinking about who you trust to guide you to a place of Shalom in your own life?

Wednesday Reflection: So I've been hinting at these connections that I'm just starting to notice between the tower of Babel and the rest of the **BIG** story of the Bible. One connection is the importance of cities/civilization. Cities are different than they were in the days of Bible- especially in America. For instance- I live in Eagle River, Alaska in what most would call the burbs but don't be fooled- that's still the city. A city is anyplace where society has expressed its will and made a safe and (hopefully) prosperous place for humans to live and pursue a life of Shalom through connection, creativity and technological advance. We see all three ideas in the story of Babel:

They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:4 (NLT)

They gather together so that they won't be scattered and through technology they find new ways to build bigger and better structures. So what's the problem? The reason they're doing it is the main problem (that we may make a name for ourselves- i.e. narcissism) and to a lesser extent (although still a symptom of the narcissism) that they are ignoring the instructions of God to "fill the earth".

When God created Adam & Eve His instructions to them were quite clear:

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it." Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

Whether we can see it yet the message we'll get as we continue through the **BIG** story of the Bible is that God was instructing them to build a city (and eventually cities plural) that would fill every corner of the planet. How do they know that was inherent in God's instructions to them? Because when they failed God promised to send The Rescuer Who would do all the things Adam & Eve failed to do. He would live the life we were asked to live but didn't. He would then die the death we were destined to die because we had failed to live the life we were created to live out. And then this Rescuer would generously and graciously share the reward that rightfully belongs only to the One Who can actually live the life we were created to live- eternal life. And when this Rescuer is all finished and has accomplished all that the Father intended from the beginning with Adam & Eve what do find? A city:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God. Revelation 21:1-2 (NLT)

When Jesus has everything exactly as God wanted it from the beginning the result is a city. Some of you are probably thinking, "but I don't like cities. I like the burbs. Cities are messy and dangerous and crowded and dirty and..."

You may not like cities as they are now but when we get to Heaven what will we find? The city of God:

I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Revelation 21:22-26 (NLT)

A city with every tribe, every tongue, every race, every nation that has ever been a part of the history of this planet. I think the desire for this city that we were created to be a part of is deep in the heart of every human being which is why we read about all these attempts to build a city in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. If you remember, Cain built the first city. Remember Cain? Not a great guy. Lots of issues and he didn't feel one bit bad about them. Then the next mention of a city is here in Babel- a city built by Nimrod (the one-who-rebels). If we're not careful we'll get the idea that cities are bad places and it is certainly true that bad stuff does happen in cities but so does really good stuff.

One of the connections in the story of Babel is that we were created to live in community with one another in cities that are ruled over by the spirit of God. Cities where we provide justice for the oppressed and safety for the weak. Where the rights of the powerless are never trampled and where love and shalom reign. One day we'll have it. Until then the message of Babel is, don't try to achieve it through your own efforts- you can't do it.

Thursday Reflection: This week we're talking about the Tower of Babel- a story that has always confused me. I mean, I could tell they did something wrong. But what? Why was God bothered by them building a sky scraper? Don't we build them all the time these days? Why doesn't that bother God?

I just couldn't make much sense out of this story. But the more I get the **BIG** story of the Bible floating around in my brain the more connections I start to see. For instance, the fact that God told both Adam & Eve as well as Noah and his family to spread out and fill the earth but the Babel builders decide to settle down and not be scattered. And then there's the reasoning behind why the Babel builders built Babel (try saying that 3 times fast!):

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:4 (NLT)

Did you see it? To make a name for themselves. That's always a red flag in the **BIG** story of the Bible. Why? Because the whole point of human existence is SUPPOSED to be about making my

life about more than just myself. In fact, if I make my life only about making a name for myself I will spend my life asking "is this all there is?"- even if I make it to the pinnacle of whatever area I choose to make-a-name-for-myself. Does that mean ambition is bad? No way! God created us to be world changers. To impact this world for Him and for others and there's the rub- when our ambition leads us to change the world in the Name of God for the good of the world then we find true satisfaction and shalom. When we only seek to make-a-name-for-ourselves we find success in any field to be ultimately empty.

There are lots of ways of talking about it but the Bible calls it idolatry. Now I know what you're thinking- isn't idolatry something the ancients struggled with? When we picture idolatry we think of savages dancing around a fire and bowing to a carved head. We think of pagan gods that demanded a sacrifice from those who would worship them. We think we are much too modern and sophisticated to fall for such a thing. But we do.

Turns out the gods haven't gone away- they've just gotten sneaky and now they get us to sacrifice the best of our time, energy, resources and even our relationships and health without us even realizing we're doing it. Yes it's true that the ancient Israelites saw idols as carved animals (the golden calf ringing any bells) that represented spiritual powers that they sought to manipulate (a practice God warned His people about over and over again) but as time went on they started to realize that idolatry is mainly something that takes place within the confines of the human heart:

(They) have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that will make them fall into sin. Ezekiel 14:3 (NLT)

And just like our predecessors we set up idols in our hearts and embrace things that make us fall into sin. Don't think so? Want an example. Probably the clearest instances of idolatry in the modern world revolve around what we'd now call addiction. What happens to an addict? We come to the altar of drugs or alcohol hoping to find shalom (a sense that all is right in the world and there is peace between me and heaven, me and the other people in my life and me with my internal self). We seek out a high to make us feel good or to block out the noise that is filling our brains and what happens? At first the god (alcohol or whatever your drug of choice might be) delivers on the promise of shalom. We worship at the altar of pleasure or numbness and sacrifice the best of our time, energy, resources and eventually our relationships and health are required of us (when recreational use crosses over into addiction). At first the drug delivers but over time it takes more and more to give us the same feeling and eventually we can't reclaim that initial feeling but we are no longer free to walk away- we are hooked. Our god takes more and more and gives us less and less until in the end it's taken everything and left us with nothing.

Idolatry.

But it's not just substance abuse that manifests itself as a modern day American idol. Money, power, success, pleasure. So many things that people will "worship" (sacrifice the best of their time, energy, resources, relationships and health) become idols in our lives if we're not careful.

Don't be greedy, which is the same as worshiping idols. Colossians 3:5 (CEV)

The problem with most of these things is not that they are inherently bad- most of them are good as far as they go and can be part of what makes living in this world beautiful. But when they become our gods we find they make a lousy foundation for our lives.

And that's exactly what the Babel builders discover- God loves cities. He loves when His children take the raw materials He has given us to make something beautiful or useful. But when we do these things to make-a-name-for-ourselves then the good things become idols and we find ourselves on a very dangerous path. A path God is committed to helping us get off of. When the Babel builders find themselves on that path God doesn't sit idly by letting them destroy themselves and plunge the planet back into the darkness of the pre-Noah days:

God came down to look over the city and the tower those people had built. God took one look and said, "One people, one language; why, this is only a first step. No telling what they'll come up with next-they'll stop at nothing! Come, we'll go down and garble their speech so they won't understand each other." Then God scattered them from there all over the world. And they had to quit building the city. That's how it came to be called Babel, because there God turned their language into "babble." From there God scattered them all over the world. Genesis 11:5-9 (MSG)

What is going on here? It's God warning us of the dangers of a life lived turned inward on oneself (the definition of sin and narcissism). And we see the natural consequences of that kind of life- it always always always eventually leads to a life of isolation and confusion. That's what happened to the Babel builders. And it's what happens to us if we center our lives on ourselves.

So what the solution? Ah- I'm glad you asked. So is Moses. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are all about how we got into the predicament in which we find ourselves. It paints a very bleak picture of human nature. But it isn't the end of the story. There have been glimmers of light throughout these first 11 chapters and in chapter 12 we will be introduced to a blinding light of faithfulness (which as it turns out is the antidote to narcissism)- a man named Abram. Abram we will learn if far from perfect but he is someone who is willing to call-upon-the-Name-of-the-LORD and he is willing to fold his flawed, weak, messed up life into the call of God and find out what being blessed-to-be-a-blessing is all about. We'll start looking at this life of the father-of-the-faithful next week but for today maybe spend some time thinking about what things you might have allowed to become idols in your own life.

Friday Reflection: Ok- this one is LONG but it's one of my favorite things I've ever written (shouldn't be tough to believe with the standards I've set ;o). You may want to break up reading this over a couple of sessions... YOU'VE BEEN WARNED.

So it may have felt like we finished up our look at the story of the Tower of Babel yesterday and we kind of did but I did want to take one day to look at some more connections that I am starting to see between Babel and the rest of the **BIG** story of the Bible. Spoiler alert- today we're going to look at the connections between Babel, Eden, Sinai, Jerusalem and Heaven. Sound like an impossible endeavor. When did that ever stop us? So let's get started with the connection between Eden, Jerusalem and Heaven.

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made... In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:8-9 (NLT)

Have you ever wondered where the Garden of Eden was located? I once spent quite a bit of time and energy trying to map it out (LONG before google was around to give me hundreds of ideas to wade through). I finally realized that the flood would have completely changed the topography of the land of the Bible so the geography that is described in Genesis 1 and 2 would be useless in trying to figure out the location of Eden post flood. We may not be able to figure out where Eden was from the geography given us in the opening pages of Genesis but there are still some clues I think.

And I'm starting to wonder if it might have been located where Jerusalem now exists? The more I see the **BIG** story of the Bible the more I start to realize the importance of the hill upon which Jerusalem now sits. It will play a HUGE role in the life of Abraham, Isaac, King David and so many other stories in the Bible between David and Jesus. I mean, even the beginning of the church will take place on that hill. But that's the not the last we hear of Jerusalem. In the book of Revelation when John is shown "what will surely take place" one of the last things he sees is this:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God... Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life. Revelation 22:1-2 (NLT)

Wait a minute- what is the Tree Of Life doing in the New Jerusalem? I thought the Tree of Life was in Eden. Remember- God didn't destroy Eden when Adam & Eve were evicted. He just made it unavailable to them. How? If Eden still existed somewhere on this planet wouldn't we have found it now that we've pretty much fulfilled the instruction to fill-the-earth? Not if Eden was simply moved to another dimension. I don't want to get to Art Bell-sy with you (for those of you uninitiated in the ways of Art Bell and his radio talk show coast to coast you need to google this guy- he was like the X-Files meets... well reality. I was a regular caller on Art's show back in the 90s but I was finally barred from the show because I was always just calling to mess with the true believers- a story for another time I guess) but I'm wondering if our geography and Heaven's/Eden's geography aren't separated by miles but by a change of dimension. The Kingdom of God is described by Jesus as something that is "coming near". He once said that the kingdom is "coming" but not in a way you'll be able to see with your eyes because, as Jesus put it- the Kingdom of God is within you.

Let's get back to the connection between Eden and Jerusalem. The Tree of Life was in Eden. At the end when all is restored the Tree of Life (actually two of them which is fascinating) are in the New Jerusalem. Why? Maybe because they are one and the same. We just can't see it- yet.

But there's a connection there, don't you think? Whether it's as Twilight Zone-y as I'm exploring currently or not there's a connection. But that's not all- there's also a connection between Babel and Mt. Sinai where God came down and gave His people (the children of Abraham) His Covenant- we call them the 10 Commandments.

In Babel the people attempt to storm Heaven. They want to ascend to God by their own work and ability. We saw yesterday that's called idolatry. There was no need for them to storm Heaven (nor any possibility of success as it turns out)- way back in Genesis 3:15 God tells the people that their attempt to, as the serpent put it "be like God" was a huge flop and that in their failed attempts they had incurred a debt they could never pay. But God would fix it. God would be the One to come-down one day and do for the people what they could never do for themselves- reconnect heaven and earth. Reconnect the spiritual and the physical. The Babel builders seem to have forgotten this ill fated attempt of Adam & Eve's to do basically the same thing they were now attempting- to storm heaven for themselves. Even in this story Moses is trying to get us to see how silly (and how pointless) this plan is by showing us that twice in the story of Babel God "comes down" to us. We will see this over and over as we continue with the **BIG** story of the Bible. God will "come down" to Abraham over and over. He will "come down" to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and then He will "come down" to Moses. And at Sinai He will hand down to the people of God His covenant that is the blueprint for people on how to live in "shalom" (peace with God, others and ourselves)- we call it the 10 Commandments now:

Then the Lord told Moses, "Go down and prepare the people for my arrival. Consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing. Be sure they are ready on the third day, for on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai as all the people watch." Exodus 19:10-11 (NLT)

God's plan has always been to "come down" to us. The prophecy in Genesis 3:15 didn't give us in way the idea that we could EVER hope to ascend to God. That is why the plan has ALWAYS been for God to descend to us. At Sinai we find one of the most important moments where God makes good on His promise to "come down"- but it's not the last moment. If we're ranking God's "come down" moments we can't forget the night in Bethlehem when God stepped into our world in the form of a baby and became one of us. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled (at least it was the beginning of that fulfillment) in a little cave under a house in a backwater town with a population of just a couple of hundred.

Is the incarnation the pinnacle of God's promise to "come down"? Maybe. But if it is there's a close second. In the hours before Jesus would allow Himself to be hung on a cross and killed (paying the debt Adam & Eve incurred when they attempted to storm heaven WAY back in the beginning) He told His disciples that He was going away. He told them they couldn't follow right now and that they would be tempted to be sad but really they should be happy because if Jesus goes then the Father will send "the comforter". The Holy Spirit. Our guide. God Himself Who would I've within each of God's children.

And 50 days after Jesus' death (10 days after His ascension to His throne) as the disciples obediently sat in an upper room in Jerusalem (maybe very close to where the Tree of Life once stood (and maybe still stood in the alternate reality of paradise) something happened.

God. Came. down.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they

exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Acts 2:5-8 (NLT)

Do you see the connections with Babel and Sinai? At Babel the people were attempting to storm Heaven and the were sorely disappointed in the outcome. At Pentecost the people were waiting faithfully for God to "come down" as Jesus had promised and when it happened their fear turned to the most impressive courage this planet has ever know. At Babel the people all spoke one language but because of their motives they ended up in total confusion and isolation unable to understand one another. At Pentecost (Jerusalem) everyone spoke a different language but everyone could understand what was being said to them.

What's happening in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

The curse of Babel is being undone because of the work of the Rescuer. It was His plan all along. There was no need (and no possibility by the way) to storm heaven with our own strength and ability. God's plan has always been to "come down" to us. We were never going to be able to attain Heaven so God promised to bring Heaven back to earth.

At Sinai we see a blurry shadow of this plan. With Jesus' birth it gets a bit clearer. On the day of Pentecost it becomes clearer still. But it will finally be clear as day when Jesus returns (comes down) for good on the Last Day:

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. Revelation 22:3-5 (NLT)

The curse- gone. The debt- paid. The throne of God- here on earth in the New Jerusalem (along with 2 trees of life which I never really did talk about did I? Why 2 trees of life? I'm wondering if maybe because of the work of Jesus that the other famous tree from the Garden of Eden- the Tree of the Knowledge Of Good and Evil- has been transformed from a tree of death into a Tree Of Life? Not sure but that'd be really cool if that's why. I can't wait to find out). And the people of God will have the Name of Lamb Of God on their foreheads (and I'm pretty sure we're supposed to see a connection between the Lamb's name on our foreheads and the Babel builders seeking to make-a-name-for-themselves but I need to finish and let you get to the rest of your day).

The story of Babel always confused me. I can't say I have all the answers but the connections I'm seeing between it and the rest of the **BIG** story of the Bible have made this one of my favorite stories in the Bible. I can't wait to see the rest of the story of God "coming down" and I'm so thankful that He promised to do that because I know I could never storm Heaven on my own. I'll leave you with the final words of John from the book of Revelation:

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people. Revelation 22:20-21 (NLT)