

The Babel Effect

In case you don't know the story, it happened after earth's population had been wiped out by the flood of Noah's day.

The narrative is taken up in the Bible in the Book of Genesis. Chapter ten recounts the tremendous population growth from the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Chapter eleven recounts the eastward spread of the population, with all people maintaining a single language. It was there, on the plain of Shinar, at the site that became Babel, that people hatched a plan. They would build for themselves a city and a tower—its top reaching into the heavens. This likely was an occult center for worshipping the “hosts of heaven.”

This may well have been the commencement of the most ambitious construction project ever undertaken. The ability to make good on this plan must not be underestimated. We need only consider the incredible engineering skills and construction feats of other ancient civilizations such as the Egyptian pyramids and the marvels of Inca/Mayan culture of South and Central America. There is one basic difference. The Egyptians and Incas built with massive, perfectly fitted rock, while the Babel project used bricks of their own making, joined with a bonding agent.

Thus commenced the labor on a city and a tower with a particular goal in its construction. It would forever establish the genius and the might of men to control their own destiny. Noah's ark was built to God's design to save humanity for God. Babel, in contrast, was to be built to save man apart from God. Babel stands for matter as the only source of meaning. In today's terms, they would ensure their well-being and their future in the ability to understand the workings of science and nature. But as Andrew Nelson Lytle pointed out, this is “accepting the shell for the total meaning. His [man's] vanity would lead him into thinking that he could control matter, and hence life—the ultimate folly.”

But the “shell” of nature could not then, and cannot now, be understood through the minds of men, even as a turtle cannot be understood by its shell. When we once had a snapping turtle in our yard, we knew the shell got there via the turtle. Had we imagined a thousand other ways the shell of the turtle made it into our front yard, all would have been wrong. That's the fatal mistake of a generation trying to understand and interact with nature apart from God. The really telling part of this error lies in the fact that the most brilliant scientists, looking into the shell of nature, have only their hundreds of unlikely theories of how it came together, with equally unlikely theories on how to save the planet.

And the outcome of Babel? The project to challenge the heavens didn't get finished. Unknown to them, God was still in control. The God that judged the evil of Noah's day with a flood now spread confusion of tongues and plans throughout the construction site of Babel. Thus, the unity of those aspiring humanists was interrupted. Their plans came to naught, and the Lord scattered them on the face of the earth.

Apparently, short memories of divine judgment combined with the false exaltation of man's devices are always the bane of human existence.

Americans seem to be especially cursed with a tragic loss of memory. We know that at least for the most part, our ancestors and our government once knew that nature and science have their meaning in God. To know this is to know that no king, ruler, or political system is in ultimate control. It is to know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men and that nations ought to reflect the truth of God.

Yet even now, in a mad notion of intrinsic power, and a pinnacle position among nations, western civilization is in a frenzy of self-destruction. Freedom and liberty is rapidly being transformed into a gutter culture. This happens on two fronts. The first comes in the form of personal permissiveness. Without respect for God, people will do as they please. We now live in a nation and culture where necessary parameters are not established and preserved by truth and integrity, but by cumbersome precautions and unreliable security systems. No businesses, retailers, or nations are immune from hackers, thieves, and frauds. The last of moral restraints are rapidly trampled under. To make moral judgments is to be judged as intolerant. Rising generations are not taught that it is always wrong, always harmful, and often fatal, to defy the biblical limits on sexual impulses. The scourge of AIDS, though filling millions of early graves, has been carefully disassociated from its sordid cause.

But the lack of godly cohesion also allows people in key positions to rule and coerce in destructive ways. The departure of righteous precepts will be followed with oppression, intended or not. The net result is human powers playing God over the people. Acceptance of abortion left the value of human life to the individual decisions of expectant mothers and abortion providers, leaving the land defiled with innocent blood. The unforeseen consequence is an aging population and a barely sustainable level of repopulation. Even now, Western Europe is sustained by immigration.

Talk about short memory. A few years ago, marriage was defined and limited to the union of one man to one woman. Known homosexuals could not even serve in the military. Now, "coming out" is considered heroic. We can expect difficult times ahead for those who disagree. But homosexual rhetoric aside, their sterile existence witnesses against them. They are alive only by the gift of opposite sex coupling. Further, the well-being of future generations and the very survival of civilization depends not on them, but on those who marry the opposite sex, bring children into the world, and nurture those children in father/mother context. In all the change of law and court orders, nothing at all about men and woman has actually changed. Homosexuality bears no fruit and contributes nothing to human existence. This, then, is no mere disagreement on the morality of the issue, or even a mere fight against Christian faith. This is a self-devouring fight against biology itself. This empty shell of nature ends up destroying nature.

Let's wrap this up with a very different Biblical account. The Bible speaks of *the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel [the people of God] ought to do* (1 Chronicles 12:32). They knew the perils of the day. They knew what to do about them.

My challenge is to the church. Recent polls show that western Christians are not like the children of Issachar. There is only a scant lifestyle difference between Christians and their unbelieving counterparts. Apparently, the family once noted for praying together no longer finds compelling

cause for staying together. Any serious survey of evangelical churches reveals that few take any serious stand against raising up new blended families out of broken marriages. The Bible calls it adultery. And their offspring? It's hardly surprising that many of the children of these unions have no particular qualms against immorality before marriage.

While there is evangelical concern for selected moral wrongs (such as abortion and homosexuality), the energy that should be directed toward the purity of the church is mostly directed away from the church into politics and government, even while the worldly church is itself unprepared for the judgment of God.

Yet God will not accept us based on our own "Christian" profession. Thus we need to unpack the single factor through which we may be prepared to face the judgment of God. It was preached by John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus Christ. Then it was immediately preached again by Jesus Himself. It then became the driving theme for the powerful inroads of the Gospel. It also came as the final word in Scripture to churches struggling to find their way (Revelation, Chapters two and three). It came in a single word statement – "***Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand***" (Matthew 4:17).

Repentance is the accurate, sorrowful knowledge of God's case against our sins. In repentance, we bring those sins to God for forgiveness. Thus does God deliver us *from our sins*. Otherwise the sinner falls under the condemnation of God—eternally.

Sadly this two thousand-year-old message has been greatly tampered with in modern times. The popular goal today is to make Christianity, the love of God, and the character of Jesus Christ attractive to the multitudes. The message of the cross is no longer taught as the costly way of hardship, trial, and persecution of faithful believers. Yet those who will not deny themselves and take up the cross to follow Jesus are not worthy of Him and have no claim of being prepared for the kingdom of God. True repentance recognizes the gulf between the holy and flawless character of God and the just condemnation of sin and sinners. Without repentance and faith in Christ, there is no reasonable expectation of an actual conversion. True conversion unfailingly turns people from the power of darkness and translates them into the kingdom of God's Son.

~Lester Troyer