

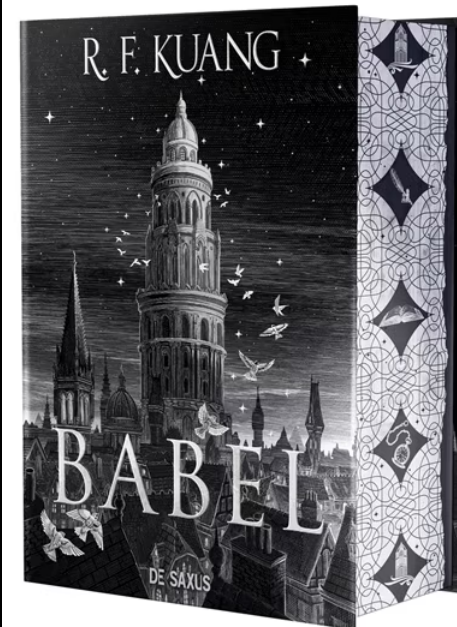
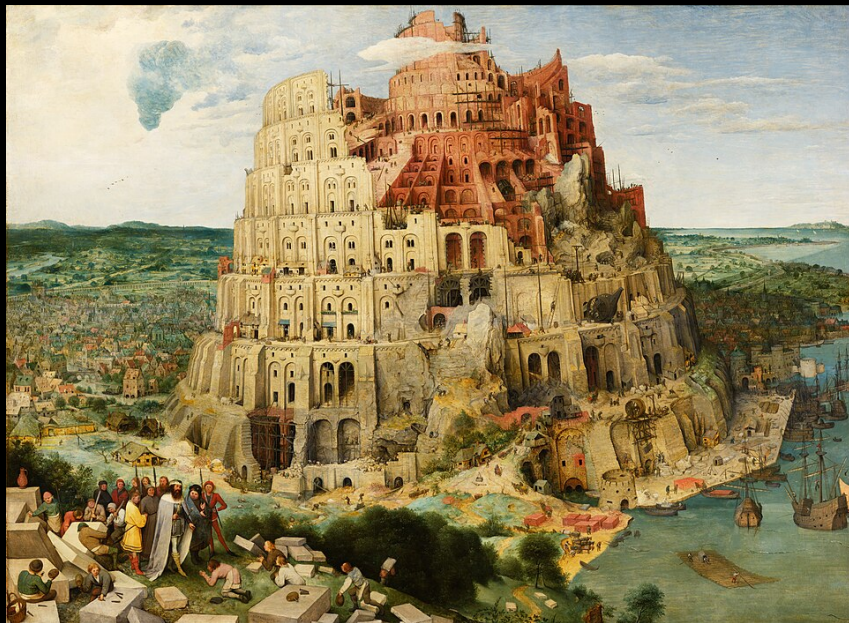
Tower of Babel

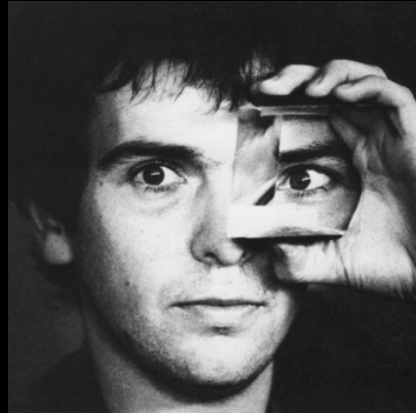
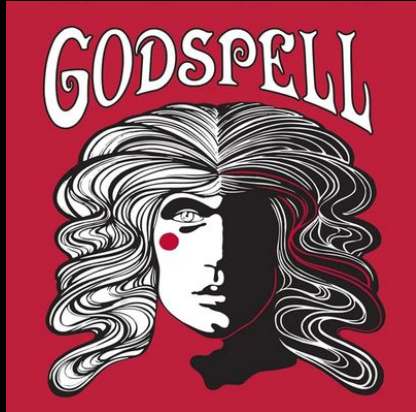
August 24 | Stephanie Fehr



Simplistic version

- God created a perfect world, but people messed it up
- So God started the world over, the world filled up with people again
- People wanted to build a tower to show how great and famous they were without God's help
- God didn't like that so God confused them and caused them to speak different languages
- God still loved them
- God had a plan to rescue them and us and that's a part of God's story





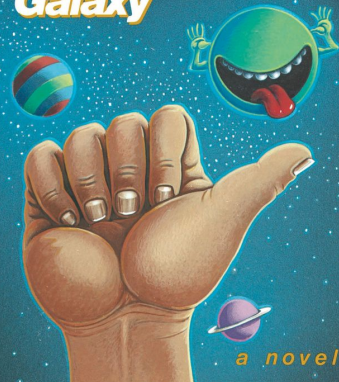
Context

- **Genesis 11, after Noah's Ark and before Abraham in Genesis 12**
- **Noah's son Ham's son Canaan is cursed**
- **Canaanites - enemies of the Israelites, live in the Promised Land**



DOUGLAS ADAMS

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy



Context

- **Genesis 10: Table of Nations, Noah's sons spread out**
 - “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (9:1), “multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (9:7)
 - v.2: Japheth - Mediterranean region
 - v.6: Ham - Northern Africa, Canaanite/ Promised Land/Israel today
 - v.21: Shem - to the north and east



Context

- **Genesis 10: Table of Nations, Noah's sons spread out**
 - 70 names - completeness
 - Affirming a common origin and unity of all people



Context

- **Genesis 10:8-12: mini-narrative**
 - A mighty warrior: Nimrod
 - v.9: “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.”
 - v.10: Nimrod builds the centre of the Kingdom of Babylon in Shinar
 - Genesis was written down during the Babylonian Exile



Context

- **All throughout Genesis 10: “...peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with their own language.” (v.5, again in v.20, v.31)**
- **Genesis 11:1: “Now the whole world had one language and common speech.”**
- **What gives???**



Context

- **Options:**
 - **The biblical narrative is out of order**
 - **“the whole land” - that area had one language**
 - **Two stories as to why many languages:**
 - **Gen. 10: fulfillment of fruitfulness and multiplication, what God asked them to do**
 - **Gen. 11: anti-Babylon/anti-empire**



The Tower of Babel

- **Genesis 11:1-2: A group settles in Shinar, they are unified in language**
- **V.3: they turn to one another and create a new way of building a city, create bricks and use tar**
- **Unity in language - they can collaborate, create new technology**



The Tower of Babel

- **v.4: “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.”**
- **Tower: with a head, to reach the gods**
- **Make a name for ourselves: empire mentality**
- **Be scattered: fear**



The Tower of Babel

- **v.5: “the LORD came down to see the city and the tower”**
- **Sees the plan for dominance, sees the people are resistant to spread out**
- **Confused language - now they are forced to spread and scatter**
- **The desire for unity is not a bad thing, however...**
- **Self-serving, fearful, lacking trust**
- **Uniformity**



The Tower of Babel

- **Genesis 12: God chooses Abram/ Abraham**
- **“I will make you a great nation” - God will do it**
- **God’s Upside-down Kingdom**
- **God came down to the tower - God consistently chooses humility**



The Tower of Babel

- **Parallel passage: Pentecost, Acts 2**
- **Followers of Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit, speak in many languages**
- **Celebration and affirmation of diversity - many languages**
- **Unity achieved through diversity**



The Tower of Babel

- **Parallel passage: Pentecost, Acts 2**
- **“At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit preserves, affirms, approves, and celebrates the sacred beauty and worth of diversity, birthed at Babel, in all its manifestations and works through it to begin scattering and sharing the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth.” - John E. Anderson**



In closing

- **What are we learning about God from the Tower of Babel?**
- **God consistently chooses a posture of humility**
- **God celebrates diversity**



In closing

- **Our response:**
 - **We should assume postures of humility, care for marginalized and vulnerable**
 - **We should celebrate diversity**

