

The Tower of Babel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Andrew Sach

[0 : 0 0] We look forward to Andrew preaching later to us, and he's going to be preaching from the book of Genesis, so do turn your Bibles to Genesis, and we're in chapter 11, the Tower of Babel.

So Genesis 11. If you don't have a Bible with you, we have plenty of visitor Bibles at the side, at the back, so please do grab one of those if you need to. So Genesis 11, and we're reading the first nine verses of chapter 11.

So reading from verse 1. Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

And they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do.

[1 : 2 8] And nothing they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore, its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.

And from there, the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth. Amen. May God bless his word to us.

Well, thank you for the invitation to be here today, and to have an almost free choice of what to speak on. I asked Paul whether I could do Luke chapter 10, because that's where we've been in our church the last couple of weeks, where Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

And Paul said, No, you can't do that, because recently Dave Jensen did Matthew 9.38, where Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. And that was a shame, because I had it all ready to go, and I was going to tell you all about harvesting, which I kind of know about more than most people in London, because I grew up in the country.

[2 : 4 9] You talk about harvest people in London, they look totally blank. Or at least they did look blank, until Clarkson's Farm. Has anyone seen that? You either love him or you hate him, Jeremy Clarkson.

But he manages to make farming into a thriller, basically. And when they have the episode in the first series, when it's harvest time, they've got 24 hours to bring in the entire harvest.

And it's really dramatic, and they get this music thumping. And I actually was looking on Google to try and remind myself of what happened in the episode, to use it as my illustration. And you know when you type in a few words of Google, and then it predicts the rest of your inquiry?

So I typed in Clarkson's Farm Harvest, and it did music? Because apparently the Clarkson's Farm Harvest music is so exciting that everyone's kind of downloading it.

And the combine harvesters are going through the fields and bringing in. Anyway, I'm not going to preach on that. I said, can I instead do Genesis chapter 11? And Paul said, yeah, that's fine.

[3 : 51] But as I was thinking about it, I actually realized that there are more connections, like genuinely, between Genesis 11 and Luke 10 than I thought. So you're going to get a kind of harvest-Babel joint sermon.

That's the plan. But we're going to start with the Tower of Babel. And so maybe you can turn back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 11. And let's have a look again at these famous verses.

These are verses that have inspired, well, art, literature, science, engineering, all sorts of things. I wonder if we can have the first slide up.

Maybe you've seen these pictures. These are two pictures by Bruegel, the elder. He painted both of them in the same year. The one on the left is currently in Vienna.

The one on the right is in Rotterdam. The one on the left is much, much bigger than the other one. But two versions by the same artist, painted in 1563. This isn't going to be a sermon about the history of art, but it is quite cool.

[4 : 56] And maybe you know the picture. And it's also quite political. Because as you look at those Towers of Babel, do they remind you of any other famous ancient building?

Anyone? The Colosseum, yeah. And you're absolutely right. Because Bruegel was a Flemish Protestant. He didn't like the Roman Catholic Church.

And so he decided to make the Tower of Babel look like it was Romish, like it was from Rome. As if to say that's just typical of what the Catholics would do. So it's a very political painting. And we're not going to go down that road.

But it's an inspiring one. Or maybe you think of the Tower of Babel in terms of this. Next slide. Our desire just to keep on building the highest towers that we can.

And I think there's quite a lot of resonance there. The Tower of Babel, I wouldn't say it's directly inspired engineering. But certainly engineers continue about the same pursuit. Actually, in this passage in Genesis chapter 11, it does represent a great advance in engineering technology.

[6 : 03] They say to each other, let's make bricks and burn them thoroughly. They had brick instead of stone and bitumen instead of mortar. So this is a major advance in building technology using bricks rather than slabs of stone.

And so up their building goes. And people have continued to do that ever since. So the highest building in the world in 1890 was the Eiffel Tower. And they didn't build it as a humble statement of engineering, did they?

It's like, look at France. This is the biggest building in the world. And then it was overtaken by the Empire State Building when that was built. And then successively, people have tried to make their tower a little bit taller than the other one, sometimes by just putting a radio mast on the top.

Say the Twin Towers before 9-11 were the highest building in the world at one stage. Currently, the highest building in the world is the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, which is a staggering 827 meters long, meters high.

But then they're worried that they're going to be overtaken. And so the Jeddah Tower in Saudi Arabia is going to be the first tower over a kilometer high. Is that amazing?

[7 : 12] And they're currently building it. And I guess that the idea behind those projects is probably the same as the idea behind the Tower of Babel.

Come, they say, let us build a tower with its top in the heavens, and let's make a name for ourselves. That's the idea, isn't it?

Their tower's a bit higher than our tower, so we're going to get all the engineers together and build an even higher one. And then everyone will know that ours is the greatest nation in the world, says France, says America, says the Shard in London near where I live, says Dubai, says Saudi Arabia.

It says, if only we can show everyone how good we are. And God says, uh-uh, no. And so on the one hand, this is a very, very simple message, and you know the story.

And it's actually quite a good Sunday school story. You know, they try to build a big tower, and God squishes it. God humbles them. God brings them down to size.

[8 : 15] We did it on a weekend away for our Sunday school children, and I recommend it. And the visual aids write themselves, don't they? You know, build a tower, and somebody else can squish it. Or maybe you do Jenga as the activity.

Then we had a song to the tune of What Should We Do With A Drunken Sailor. It's nice to see Willie Philip reappropriating Scottish nationalism hymns. Well, we reappropriated a Sailor's Drunkard's hymn.

There once was a people who wanted power, so they said, let's build a tower. But only God deserves the glory, so he came and stopped them. Blah, blah is all they heard.

Blah, blah is all they heard. Blah, blah is all they heard. That's how God stopped their building. It's a simple lesson that man exalts himself, and God squishes us.

He humbles us. And so Jesus said, didn't he, whoever wants to exalt himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

[9 : 22] He says it in Luke's Gospel twice. At awkward dinner parties. Always a bit risky inviting Jesus to dinner. He invites them to dinner, and it's the one where they all try and choose the best seats, you know, on the high table.

And then Jesus begins to talk, when you're invited to dinner, don't choose the best seats. You can imagine the people in the best seats looking very shame-faced, in case you're asked to move down. And he says, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.

That's the Tower of Babel. It's kind of simple, you might think. There's more to it, though, than that. It's a passage that's inspired art, and political, religious art.

It's inspired architectural attempts to do the same, to make a name for ourselves. It's also a passage that has inspired rogue theology. I want to tell you some dodgy theology that takes its cue from this passage.

God, in the passage, he comes down to see the city and the tower which the children of men had built. And some people argue from this that therefore God doesn't know everything.

[10 : 30] God doesn't know the future. God's a bit like us, really. He just has to come and investigate things, and he finds out things. He's learning things. It's a doctrinal movement known as open theism.

The future's open, because God's not in charge. It's a terrible thing, actually. It takes away all hope of God bringing purposes through suffering and through evil, because God doesn't know.

He's got to find out. He's got to kind of think fast, think what he can do. This theology, most recently, has been propagated by a guy called John Mark Comer. Some of you might know.

I mention the name because I've just noticed a lot of people in London are reading him. I think he's number one bestseller Christian author at the moment. He's written this book called *Practicing the Way*, and another book called *What You Believe About God Will Shape Who You Become*.

It's very popular. Maybe you haven't read it, in which case good, but a lot of people are. We're reading it as a church staff team at the moment, at Grace Church Greenwich, and I tried to give him the most benefit of the doubt that I could, to start with, but he's lost the benefit of the doubt.

[11:37] Benefit of the doubt has expired. One of my friends here, yeah, it's like giving benefit of the doubt to the chicken breast that you left at the back of your fridge three months ago. So he had the benefit of the doubt, but now it's gone, and there's a rather nasty odour to it.

So he says that God, he can be moved, he can be influenced, he can change his mind at a moment's notice, because God's a person who doesn't know the future, who just like us, has to work out what's going on.

And one of the texts that these guys use is Genesis chapter 11, verse 5. The Lord came down to see. Now, I don't think the point is that God doesn't know.

I think it's a bit more like this. What is that? Oh, it's a little tower.

The highest that humans can build it, and it's God has to come down to see. So small, so pathetic. And God loves to crush, to squish those who exalt themselves.

[13:09] Well, so far, so good. Genesis chapter 11. It's inspired art. It's got advances in engineering. There's dodgy theologians trying to twist it.

It's actually a masterpiece of structure, of biblical structure. And I wanted to show you this, just so that you can sort of appreciate the real skill of the Bible writers.

To do this, I want to show you a chiasm. Some of you have seen this before in the Bible. But I thought we would do the first ever human chiasm. So I need four volunteers to read.

And it's going to be very... I'm not going to humiliate you. It'll be very straightforward. But can four people please volunteer? Paul's already predicted which of you is going to volunteer, but we'll see if he's right. Anyone? One, two, three.

Are you right? Four. Excellent. Paul, did you... Yes, okay. One of you was predicted. Do you want to come up the front, please? That would be brilliant. Come up and stand on the stage.

[14:07] I'm going to stand over here. I need all of you up here. And I'll start.

So if you go that way... And I'll start at the end. Okay. So I'm going to narrate the story. And as I come to your bit, I'm going to give you your phrase. And you've got to say it after me. Okay.

So just look at how brilliantly this is written. The whole world had one language. Can you say loudly? The whole world had one language. As people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

Shinar and settled there. You've got to remember your phrase. And they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. They said, Come, let us build.

Come, let us build. A city with a tower. A city with a tower. With its top in the heavens. And let's make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

[15:13] Okay, that's good. Let's try that again. So... The whole earth had one language. And the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of... Shinar and settled there.

And they said to another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, bitumen for mortar. They said, Come, let us build. A set in a tower. With its name in the heavens, lest we be dispersed over the whole earth.

Okay, so far so good. It's going to get a bit more complicated because I'm going to give the Come, let us make. Come, let us build. You're going to get to do it in Hebrew. Now in Hebrew, you basically...

That's you. You basically have... You make words out of three letters. So the word for Come, let us build. L-B-N. So can you hold up an L-B-N?

Now the amazing thing about this passage is that it shapes kind of symmetrically so that when God comes down, everything changes. Everything flips over.

[16 : 13] And you'll see how this works. If this is going to work out right, hopefully it will. So off you go. And the same words. Now as people migrated from the east, they found a plane in the land of...

And they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and they had bitumen for water. Then they said... Come, let us build. A set in a tower.

With its top in the heavens and let's make a name for ourselves lest we disperse over the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the... Do you want to go that way? To see the...

Set in a tower. Which the children of man had built. And they said, Behold, they're one people. They all have one language. This is only the beginning of what they'll do. Nothing they propose to do will be impossible to them.

Come, let us go down and... Build. Build. Build. Becomes confuse. So you spell build by going L-B-N but you spell confuse by going N-B-L.

[17 : 19] Come, let us confuse their language so they may not understand one another. So the Lord displaced them over the face of the earth and they left off building the city. Therefore, its name was called...

Bebel. No, Shiner. It was called Shiner but now it's called... Babel.

Because there... The Lord confused the language. What's your phrase? It was... The whole earth had one language. Off you go. He confused the language of the whole earth.

Everything is back to front. So the whole earth had one language. They went to a place called Shiner and settled there. Come, let us... Build.

Come, let us confuse when they saw the city and the tower. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower. Come, let us confuse. And they called it Babel because there he confused the language of the whole earth.

[18 : 20] Thanks very much. The first ever human chiasm. Have a seat. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. It's really brilliantly crafted.

Everything is mirrored. Everything is turned upside down. Even the Hebrew verbs are switched around the other way around to say that when God intervenes he reverses everything.

They exalt themselves. God humbles them. They climb up to heaven. God brings them down. So far, so good. But there's something more going on here.

And actually, this isn't really going to be a sermon on the Tower of Babel. It's going to be the sermon on Genesis chapter 10. And I thought I couldn't really ask anyone else to read this because it's tricky.

So I'm going to have a game myself. Look at Genesis chapter 10. These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

[19 : 18] Sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth, Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiraz. The sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Riphah, Togemar. The sons of Javan, Elisha, Tarshish, Kittim, Dodidim.

From these, the coastlands people spread in their lands, each with his own language by their clans and their nations. Oh, interesting.

The sons of Ham, Cush, Egypt, Putt, and Canaan. The sons of Cush, Sheba, Havilah, Sabta, Ramah, and Zabtaka. The sons of Ramah, Sheba, and Dedan. Cush, fathered Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man.

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore, it said, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel. Interesting. Erech, Akkad, Kalneh, in the land of Shinar.

Interesting. From that land, he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Reboithir, Kala, Rezan, between Nineveh and Kala. That is the great city. Egypt, fathered Lydim, Ananim, Lebhim, Naphtahim, Parathim, Kalashim, from who the Philistines came, and Kaphtarim.

[20 : 26] Canaan, fathered Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Gergisites, Hittites, Archites, Sinites, Arvidites, Zemarites, Hamathites. Afterwards, the clans of the Canaanites dispersed, and the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and then direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma, and Zeboim as far as Lasha.

These are the sons of Ham by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. To Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the older brother of Japheth, children were born, the sons of Shem, Elam, Asher, Arphaxad, Lyd, Aram, the sons of Aram, Uz, Hur, Getha, and Mash, Arphaxad, father Shalah, Shalah, fathered Eber, to Eber were born two sons.

The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days, the earth was divided, interesting, in his days, his brother's name was Joktan, Joktan fathered Amalek, Shepheth, Hazaraimeth, Jerah, Hadarim, Uzal, Diklah, Obel, Abimelech, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

All these were the sons of Joktan. The territory in which they lived extended from Misha in the one direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. These are the sons of Shem by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these, the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. Now, the whole earth had one language.

[21 : 54] Oh, it's curious, isn't it? Like, what's going on here? How is that possible? They're spread out everywhere, and now they're suddenly in one place, and they're speaking all kinds of languages, and now they're speaking only one language.

It's actually pretty obvious. It's just that chapter 11 is a flashback. That's all. Chapter 11 happens chronologically before chapter 10.

I mean, it has to. In fact, there's references, aren't there, already to Babel in chapter 10. There's references already to the dividing of the earth. That's why I'm in Peleg's day, which sounds like Babel.

Chapter 11 happens first, and chapter 10 happens afterwards. Now, we're used to this, because, you know, Netflix, it does it all the time. You're watching an episode, and then, let's get the prequel. That's what it is.

Let's get the backstory. But I want us to think about why the author has written it this way around. I mean, it's a fair enough thing to do in terms of literary art and craft, but why?

[22 : 58] Well, as you look at chapter 10, I think it's a very positive chapter. It's a genealogy, which, this is the last slide, but we have it up on the script.

That's what it looks like. It took me ages to do this, but that is the genealogy of chapter 10, and all you really need to know about it is it's a very bushy family tree.

As a genealogy, it's branching and spreading and spreading out, which is actually quite different from most of the family trees in the book of Genesis. Most of the family trees are like poplars, if you know your trees, like very skinny, very narrow, you just look at the trunk.

So, in Genesis chapter 5, for example, this is the family tree. It's a very skinny one. Adam fathered Seth. He lived for 100 years.

He fathered Enosh. Had other sons and daughters. We're not going to talk about those. When Enosh lived for 90 years, he fathered Kenan. He had other sons and daughters. We're not going to talk about those. Kenan fathered Mahalel.

[24 : 01] He had other sons and daughters. We're not going to talk about those. You're only just looking at one son all the way down. You're ignoring all the branches and you're just going Seth, Enosh, Kenan, all the way until you get to Noah.

And the point of that family tree is just to tell you that Noah is descended from Seth. He's in that line. And then you get another one of it like it. Later in chapter 11, you get another very, very skinny family tree taking you all the way from Shem all the way through to Abraham.

Abraham's descended from Noah. It's descended from Seth. It's descended from Adam. Skinny family trees. This one is a bushy family tree. Well, the skinny family tree is just there to show you that Noah, Abraham, they come in the same line of promise.

That's what that's for. But what is a bushy family tree for? Branches, branches, branches. What's the point of that? I think it's to show you look at how the whole earth is being populated.

Three brothers, three brothers have three sets of genealogies and then some of those branch more into three more and then whole nations come from them. The Canaanites came from these people.

[25 : 23] The Gergashites came from those people. Look at how the whole earth is filled. Look at how people multiply. Look at how God's plans are accomplished.

That's the promise, isn't it, at the beginning of the Bible. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth, says God to Adam and Eve. And then after the flood, God says to Noah the same thing.

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And then just after the Noah story, you read this and you think, and they did. Brilliance. This is what God wanted. He wanted image bearers everywhere in the earth.

He wanted nations. He wanted languages. He wanted tribes. He wanted Chinese. He wanted Ugandan.

He wanted Scottish. He wanted Ukrainian. He wanted Russian. He wanted Australian. languages, clans, people. That was the plan, right?

[26 : 28] Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And they did, says this analogy. Flashback. the whole earth had one language.

That's not the plan. Just one. We want lots. Just one. And worse, they said, we don't want to spread out in the whole earth.

We want to stay put. We want to consolidate. We want to build a name for ourselves lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth. It's kind of insecurity, maybe.

Or maybe it's self-aggrandizement. Either way, they're rejecting God's command. We don't want to spread out. We don't want to fill the earth. And so God, he intervenes and he scatters them.

I can't believe I missed the point of it because actually, sometimes in the Bible when it wants to make the main point really obvious, it just says it more than once. Sometimes if it wants to make the main point really obvious, it says it more than once.

[27 : 29] Sometimes, I apologize. But you can see it there, right? So look down at verse 4. Let's make a name for ourselves lest we disperse over the face of the whole earth.

But verse 8, the Lord dispersed them over the face of the whole earth. And verse 9, the Lord dispersed them over the face of the whole earth. It's just exactly the same. He says it twice.

They don't want to be dispersed. God does want them to be dispersed and so they're dispersed. It's ironic actually. It's almost the exact opposite of the John Mark Comer reading where God doesn't know the future and he's not sure what to do.

No, God doesn't know the future. The future is Australians, Indians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Scottish people all over the earth. That's the plan and God's going to get there. And this is how he gets there.

Now this is so interesting for me because it means that Babel, I mean it is an intervention of judgment on the one hand, like it really is. But it's also an intervention that advances the story the way that God wants it to be advanced.

[28 : 38] Like the outcome of this is better than before it happened. How boring if everyone only speaks one language. How brilliant if you have a...

Now some of you are thinking no, no, that's not right, that's not right. Surely it was better when we all spoke one language and it's judgment that we speak many languages. I submit to you no. In chapter 10 the languages, the clans, the tribes and the nations are celebrated long before you found out how it came about.

Now maybe you're thinking, I was thinking, I started to figure this out, I'm thinking no, no but what about the day of Pentecost? Because surely at the day of Pentecost God reverses the curse of Babel.

They can all understand each other. It's like being in some kind of United Nations with an earpiece in and suddenly they can all communicate. Isn't communication a blessing?

Well sure it is a blessing but I think I've misread the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost is not quite a reversal of Babel.

[29 : 43] What would a reversal of Babel look like? Well they'd all live in one city and they'd all speak the same language. That's not what happens in Pentecost. In Pentecost they're all gathered together for a feast from all sorts of different places and they don't all speak the same language.

It's just they all hear the gospel being spoken in their own language. They've still got their own languages it's just they can understand by this miracle.

At this, the sound, the multitude came together they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. It's not that they all suddenly speak English or they all suddenly speak Hebrew or something.

No. How is it that each was here in his own language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and Mesopotamians and Judeans and Capodacians and Pontians and Asians and people from Frigia and Pamphylia Egypt and the parts of Libya being on to Cyrene and visitors from Rome.

We all hear them telling that in our own tongues the mighty works of God. God doesn't undo the language diversity. He just enables the gospel to cross that language barrier in all the glorious diversity.

- [31 : 02] And I think the clincher for me was when I looked at the book of Revelation and in Revelation you see about this great multitude that no one could count from every tribe, language, people, nation.
- Oh I realise that's a crate from Genesis chapter 10. Like that's a good thing. God doesn't want everyone the same but he does want people from all of that diversity in his church.
- So let's just put it all together. What we're saying is Babel it's kind of it's a step forward. I mean building a tower because you want to make a name for yourself isn't a step forward.
- That's just pride. And God in judgment he humbles them. But as he humbles them he brings about the end that he always wanted. A people of diverse ethnicities languages peoples tribes across the face of the whole earth.
- He always wanted Genesis chapter 10. And in the end that's what you're going to get. Now of course I know you're going through the book of Genesis as a church so you're tuned into this.
- [32 : 18] You know that one of the big stories of the book of Genesis is God turns evil for good. They have a bad purpose in it and God has a good purpose in the same thing. They want to build a tower because they're proud.
- God wants to squish their tower because he wants to have lots and lots of different languages. And so God intervention of judgment it actually brings the story forwards. Well this is mind blowing to me.
- It's not a God of plan B old rat I wish they hadn't done that or what am I going to do now the John Mark Comer God doesn't know the future God's got to go down and look.
- Now that isn't the plan at all. He is a God who's mapped out the future who even uses evil proud arrogant actions for good divinely promised ends.
- Excellent says God. I will now have diverse languages nations over the whole earth. And then it links in to Luke chapter 10 because in Luke 10 the Lord Jesus sends out 72 on a mission.
- [33 : 39] It's quite significant that I mean it's significant because it's not one. I mean John the Baptist was the famous preacher on the mission. John the Baptist was telling people to repent for the kingdom of God was at hand.
- Repent and believe. That was John the Baptist message. And then Jesus he then recruited the 12 and he sent the 12 out on the same mission basically as John the Baptist.
- So John the Baptist went ahead of Jesus to prepare his way and then he sent out the 12 in Luke chapter 9 ahead of him to prepare his way with the same message. You've got to repent and believe in the kingdom.
- And then in Luke chapter 10 it's gone 1 then 12 then he sends 72. Now 72 is very significant. I think for two reasons. The first reason I think it's almost everyone.
- Test me on this. I think this is right. By the beginning of Acts there's 120 disciples. So by Luke 10 I reckon there's probably about 72.
- [34 : 39] It's certainly most of them. I mean even if they're already 120 it's more than half. So this isn't he wants to be one of the special Christians he's going to be a missionary. It's basically all of you.
- Let's have all of you. I heard the other day about George Verwer. Some of you remember him from Operation Mobilization. He's a slightly crazy guy but wonderful godly missionary.
- Apparently he was once speaking to a bunch of Christians in London and he arrived there was no one there. And he sort of got down to pray before the sermon.

And then everyone came in the last minute and by the time he opened his eyes the room was full like it is today. Full of people. And George Verwer was just incredibly excited. He says oh my goodness we can evangelize the whole world just from you.

And then he said okay put your hand up if you did French at school. Let's try it. Put your hand up if you did French at school. Well that's enough to evangelize France.

[35 : 41] Put your hand up if you speak Mandarin. Well he can send people to China. Basically George Verwer he had a jacket which was a world map. He was just crazy about this. That's basically what Jesus did.

72 people that's almost all of you. Not the individual sort of super Christian ministry missionary but every Christian for the work to send to 72.

There's another reason why it's 72 because if you count all of the names that I tried to say in Genesis chapter 10 you get to it depends on how you count if you do it in the Hebrew or the Greek but you get to either 70 or 72 and in Luke 10 depending on which manuscript you use there's either 70 or 72 in other words there's one for every nation because God's always intended the earth to be people by people of different languages and tribes and nations now it's very exciting to preach this in a church like the trunk I don't know most of you but as I look out I doubt you're all Scottish maybe lots of you are but Glasgow is that kind of international city there'll be people studying here from all over I reckon there's a lot of nations even if you're second generation Scottish there'll be people here from all sorts of ethnicities and countries and people here who speak all sorts of different things if we were to do a whole list of all the languages we had represented and it wasn't a mistake it wasn't only a curse that caused that to come about yes they were humble yes the building became quite complicated when a

Chinese person was trying to speak to an Egyptian about where to put the next brick I mean it was difficult on the building sites but it was also a great step forward because God always wanted this he always wanted the Genesis 10 spread and then he overcame the communication barrier at the day of Pentecost by recruiting by the Holy Spirit missionaries from all different parts of the Jewish Empire and then from Acts 10 onwards missionaries in all different kinds of parts of the nations and he says now I've peopled the whole earth now go into the whole earth it surprised me that a Babel sermon has become a harvest sermon because this is the beginning of the diversity that God always wanted but now he wants the gospel to go out into all of those parts of the world he doesn't want everyone to become Scottish or English he doesn't want everyone to speak

English or Gallic he loves the diversity but that means he needs missionaries ordinary Christians actually to go into every people group you probably don't even need to leave Glasgow to do that there'll be people from your people group people from your language right here for some of you at some point you'll be going overseas back home for some of you might be traveling overseas to take the gospel but Jesus sends all of us into his diverse harvest field and what looked like a step back at Babel was really a step forward they didn't want to be scattered they want to be gathered but God wanted to disperse them everywhere God does the same move doesn't he in the book of Acts all the Christians huddled together in Jerusalem God doesn't want them all huddled together in Jerusalem he wants them to go everywhere they don't want to go everywhere so what does he do well there's a persecution breaks out against the church and

[39 : 36] Stephen's martyred and then the church are scattered Babel overtains God has a way of disrupting the holy huddle Christians all feeling secure in one place let's forever stay in this little corner of Glasgow no there's all of Scotland that's going to need Christian pastors and missionaries there's all of the world that's going to need his witnesses and if we won't go God will scatter us he'll do a Babel so that his gospel might fill all the world I'm excited about our last hymn we're going to talk about Jesus being known wherever the sun does its endless journeys run Isaac Watts wrote this hymn and actually it's a hymn that is now a bit more politically correct than it is now we're going to sing it in the more politically correct version but if you go on the internet you can find the old historic version of it and it says in the old

English let every nation arise and bring peculiar honours to our king the word peculiar doesn't mean the same thing nowadays it means distinctive honours and then in the old version it then starts to specify what peculiar things you might bring if you're French or if you're Indian or you know it's sometimes not very politically correct and it's national stereotypes but I kind of like the idea of it let the Scot bring to the king let the English I'll let you fill in the gaps for the English but the idea is it's not an accident that God's got his people from every people language tribe and nation and on the last day it will be a diverse multitude each one bringing distinctive peculiar honours in service of the Lord Jesus I'm going to lead this in prayer and then we're going to sing that hymn in a moment Father God how we praise you for your plans that are never diverted Lord we thank you that the

Tower of Babel doesn't surprise you you didn't have to come down to see because you were ignorant Lord in fact you were several steps ahead and Lord what looked like a disaster of human sin was actually harnessed by you to be a step forward towards the ends that you planned and promised that you wanted people spread out over the whole earth you wanted the diversity of languages that we even see before us around us here in this church this evening but how we praise you Lord that you overcame the language barrier and that now your gospel is heard in many languages and peoples and tribes and nations and we pray that we like the 70T like all of your people would hear this commission to go into the whole world not just in Glasgow but to go everywhere with this news for Jesus sake Amen