

The Tragedy of the City of Man

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: 22 January 2023

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to God's Word, and we're picking up things in Genesis. So do turn to your Bibles. In Genesis 9, verse 19, we read these words.

These three were the sons of Noah, and from these people of the whole earth were dispersed. And really, chapter 10 is the unpacking of chapter 9, verse 19, of how these people were dispersed over the earth.

So chapter 10, and reading from verse 1, there's some good names in here, so forgive me if I stumble at the odd point. But Genesis 10, verse 1. These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth, Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshel, and Tiraz.

The sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togamah. The sons of Javan. Elisha, Tarshish, Ketim, and Dodanim.

[1 : 29] From these, the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations. The sons of Ham.

Cush, Egypt, Putz, and Canaan. The sons of Cush. Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Ramah, and Sabteca. 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 is said, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Kalne, in the land of Shinar. From that land, he went into Assyria and built Nineveh.

Raboth-ir, Kala, and Rezem, between Nineveh and Kala. That is a great city. Egypt fathered Ludum, Ammonim, Leihim, Nephethim, Pathashim, Calashim, from whom the Philistines came, and Catherim.

[2 : 44] Canaan fathered Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth. And the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Archites, the Sinites, the Arbedites, the Zemurites, and the Hamathodites.

Afterward, the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerah, as far as Gaza. And in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma, and Zebuim.

As far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born.

The sons of Shem. The sons of Shem. Elam, Asher, Afashath, Lod, and Aram. The sons of Aram. Uz, Hal, Getha, and Mash.

Afashad fathered Shela, and Shela fathered Eber. To Eber were born two sons. The name of the one was Peleg. For in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan.

[3 : 59] Joktan fathered Almadad, Shelfath, Zamreveth, Jerah, Hadaram, Uzzel, Diklah, Obel, Abimeel, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

All these were the sons of Joktan. The territory in which they lived extended from Mesher in the direction of Sefer 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 nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

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.

[5 : 09] 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. And nothing that they proposed 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 this morning. May God bless you.

[6 : 45] It's a wonderful effort. We set a target of 35,000 pounds, which was what they needed to build the last parts of that building. But with the excess, the wonderful news is we're going to be able to furnish it, buy all the equipment that they need for that school, and really help them get up and running.

So that is a wonderful thing. And well done, everybody, for being generous and for working together to bless our brothers and sisters there in Pakistan in that way.

And I'm sure that brings great joy to all of us to know that. Well now, Genesis 10 and 11. Why is our world the way it is?

So full of opposites, so marked by paradox. There's beauty and joy and love and creativity and hope for human progress.

There's all of these things in our world. And yet also, there's so much ugliness. There's pain.

There's hatred. There's destruction. There's despair.

[7 : 56] In fact, there's so much inhumanity all around us, isn't there? A century ago, modernists focused very much on that progress. They thought the world would advance and advance.

It's all the good overcame the bad and we would live in a modernist utopia. Overtaking all of that sort of paradox. But of course, two world wars and genocides and the specter of nuclear holocaust and all of these things.

That was the reality of the 20th century. And so that worldview just isn't as convincing today, is it? In the 21st century.

In fact, now it's rather fashionable to be postmodern to say that we can't really have any explanation for the world. That we shouldn't even ask because there's no such thing as truth. There can't really be any coherence.

But of course, in real life, that is not in the world of La La Land, of people who call themselves academics. In the real world, truth actually does matter. We need explanations for things.

[9 : 02] People demand explanations for things. That's why we constantly have to spend so much money on public inquiries and things. Because people know that truth about the reality of the world really does matter.

And deep down, people are searching for truth, for ultimate truth. About life and about the world, about its meaning. We want to explain the world.

We want to explain our place in the world. Well, friends, only the Bible's view of the world really does give us a truly coherent explanation of life as we actually know it to be.

And Genesis, this book of beginnings, it tells us how this world began, how it came to be the world that we know it really is today.

And above all, it tells us why these things are so. But it's not just recounting past history that explains and makes sense of the present.

[9 : 57] It's also unveiling God's purpose for this world in the future. It's telling us where it's all going. And if we want to understand life as we know it actually is now, we also need to understand God's purpose for the world from the beginning right to its very end.

What we've looked at already before Christmas in Genesis 1-9, it's often called the prehistory. It stretches right back into the mists of time, right back to the very creation of the world. And so naturally, it often seems strange to us.

It seems like another world. Well, it is. But here in Genesis 10-11, we come to something of a transition. It's the fourth account of Genesis. It begins at verse 1, the line of Noah. And then there's the fifth account, beginning at chapter 11, verse 10, the line of Shem. And that takes us to the end of these first five books of generations that make up Genesis. And then at chapter 11, verse 27, book 6 begins. And books 6-10 comprise 80% of this whole book of Genesis. And that's the story of the patriarchs, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of their families.

[11:10] And suddenly, you see, here at Genesis 10-11, we get into a world that's much more familiar. It's more recognizable. It's a world of known geography. It's full of peoples and languages and cities.

And it's a world where distrust and warfare and antagonism reigns. Genesis 10-11, we could say, is the beginning of the world as we know it to be.

And we shouldn't be surprised to find here so much that explains why the world is as it is and why it has been since the very earliest times of human civilization.

We're going to come back to it again next time because there is so much here that's very important for us to see about how the Bible story unfolds right to its very end.

And it is a tale of two cities. The city of man and the city of God. But what Genesis 10-11, verse 9, shows so very clearly is the tragedy that is the city of man.

[12:23] See, to understand our world, we need to understand the two acts of this fourth book of Genesis, which tells us why the world is as it is. And it is both at the sovereign hand of God and also because of the sinful heart of man.

Our world can only be explained by both the sovereign control of God and also the sinful corruption of man.

So first of all, let's look at chapter 10, which reminds us that this is a world in every respect, in every part, under the control of God.

The ultimate explanation for everything in this world always lies in God's sovereign purpose. The world is as we know it to be because God's sovereign hand has purposed that it should be this way. God has overseen every single development in world history. And he's controlled it all according to his righteous purpose.

[13:34] And the reason that we find ourselves in a world of so many paradoxes, so many contrasts, is that it is a world that is both under God's blessing and under his judgment.

It's under his sovereign care and it's under his sovereign curse. And chapter 10 makes both of these things very clear for us.

Look at the first thing. God cares for the whole world and all its peoples. God has not changed tack from his original purpose in creation.

Do you remember the original command to humankind? Be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it. Again, after the flood, remember chapter 9, verse 1.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth. Then again in chapter 9, verse 7, the same command. Well, under God's gracious and sovereign care, that is exactly what Genesis 10 describes.

[14:33] As Paul said, chapter 9, verse 19 gives a summary. From these sons of Noah, the people of the whole earth were dispersed, were populated. And chapter 10 now shows us the intimacy, the precision of God's care in working out his blessing.

You see, each individual group, each clan and people and nation and language has its own territory that is appointed by God. Later on, at the end of Deuteronomy, in Moses' great song in Deuteronomy 32, he says this.

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples, according to the numbers of the sons of Israel.

And that's what he's portraying right here in Genesis 10. You can see that repeated phrase, three times for emphasis. Verse 5, again in verse 20, and again in verse 31.

Each with a land, with a language, with clans, and with nations. From Shem and Ham and Japheth. Now, of course, we are to read this historically.

[15:46] But we're not to read it in a wooden, in an over-literalistic sense. Because very obviously, when you read this, it is a stylized list, like all the other genealogies. There are exactly 70 names here.

And they're mentioned often in multiples of seven. You see that in the first verse, the sons of Japheth, seven of them. Some of the names we get here are clearly personal names. But some of them are names of cities.

Verse 15, we've got Sidon. Verse 13, the name of a country, Egypt. Some of them are nations.

Verse 16, like the Jebusites, the Hivites, and so on.

But what it's representing for us is the whole known world in the time of Moses and the Israelites that he's writing for. And it's put here to show us the relationships between these different nations and their general geographical locations.

So, we might say that in Britain, the Scots are in the north, the English are in the south, and the Irish are in the west. Well, we all understand that, don't we? If you're going to be really pedantic and picky, you might say to me, Oh, well, there are parts of England that are actually further north than some parts of Scotland.

[16:57] And there are parts of Northern Ireland that are further south, actually, than some parts of Southern Ireland. And in fact, east coast cities like Edinburgh are actually further west than west coast cities like Cardiff and Bristol.

That's all true. But you would look at me and say, don't be ridiculous. We all know what you mean. The Scots are in the north, the English in the south, the Irish in the Welsh, and the west. That's perfectly sufficient, isn't it, to give the general picture.

And that's what it is here. We're given a general picture, a stylized picture, in a short compass. But it tells us that God has carefully ordered the world and the nations, all under his sovereign control, and all under his blessing, and under his care.

So, first of all, we get the Japhethites. And they are the most distant peoples from Israel. Verses 2 to 5 there. Speak about the Greeks, the Medes, the Mediterranean, the coastal peoples.

Remember we said, when we were looking at chapter 9, these are the Gentile peoples that we meet in the New Testament world.

Last of all in the list are the Shemites from verse 21. The Semitic people, that's Israel's nearest neighbors. So there's in Arabia, there's in Syria.

[18:10] And of course, notice verse 25, the Hebrew people who are descended from Eber. And in between those two, you have the cursed Hamites.

You have all the people who are all around Mesopotamia. And note there that these verses contain Israel's great enemies. Verse 6, Egypt. Verse 10, Babel.

Babylon. And verse 11, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. You see, what's being laid out here is the transition from the prehistory to the realm of known history and geography.

And what's being shown is that God has the same clear purpose still for all the world. God's care for the whole world hasn't stopped. And that is vital because, you see, Moses is flagging this up for his people, especially because he wants to remind them of that and remind us of that before the story seems to narrow down to focus on just one family and one nation.

That is Abraham and all his descendants. And he's reminding us, before we can narrow down to that, don't forget God is God of all the earth and all the peoples and cares for them all.

[19:25] His blessing in the world is a universal blessing. He cares for every single clan and land and language and nation.

And that's why we find God's blessings in every place, in every culture in the world, at least to some extent. There's joy, isn't there?

There's love, there's creativity, there's beauty all the world over. And God means there to be. God himself has woven that web of great diversity among the peoples of this world.

God is the author of the rich diversity of color, of language, of culture, all of these things. God has poured his creativity into this whole wide world and all its peoples.

And we should rejoice in the cultural diversity and the ethnic diversity of our world. God has ordered that according to his sovereign grace.

[20:25] Of course, that's not at all the same thing as saying that we should rejoice in all the many false religions in this world. Of course we shouldn't.

The Apostle Paul tells us very plainly, doesn't he, in Acts chapter 17, speaking of all the peoples when he says, God determined the periods, the boundaries of their dwelling place, just as we see here in Genesis 10.

Why? That they should seek God. God, the only true God, and not rebel against him. And of course, you see, that is what brings us to this other side of God's sovereign control over this world, because men did not seek God.

And despite God's care and his blessing continuing on the earth, mankind's sin is also a continuing reality. And the effect of that is a continual blight, despite all of God's blessings of life.

So yes, this whole world is entirely under God's sovereign care, but it is also under his sovereign curse. And that too is what explains the world as we know it to be.

[21 : 46] The Bible doesn't hide from us the reality of sin and evil in the world. It's plain. It's honest. It faces up to it. It tells us that the world is evil as we know it to be.

We'll come to chapter 11 in a minute, but there's two very important clues right here in chapter 10 that flag up for us the darker side of God's sovereign control over the earth and the reality of his curse as well as his care, the reality of his judgment as well as his blessing.

And the first clue there is in verses 8 to 12, where one name sticks out, doesn't it, and gets extended treatment. Nimrod. Nimrod's very name means we shall rebel.

Well, that's pretty significant, isn't it? That's a pretty significant nickname. Verse 9 says he was a mighty man. That is, he was a tyrant. He reminds us of the tyrants, the Nephilim of chapter 6, the fierce and fearsome warriors.

And verses 10 to 12 tell us he was also a builder. Do you note that? A builder of cities. Well, that's another bad omen. Do you remember evil, murderous Cain in Genesis 4?

[23 : 01] Abel, remember his brother, built an altar to God, but Cain built cities to exalt his own name. Look at the names of Nimrod's cities.

First one, they are Babel, Babylon. All the way through the Bible, that name, Babylon, stands for everything that is opposed to God.

It is the antithesis of Jerusalem, the city of God. Babel, Babylon, is quintessentially the city of man. And then there's Nineveh in Assyria, the cruelest conquerors of the ancient world.

This is no accident. These were already known to the people of Moses' day, and they were feared. There's no doubt Moses' first readers would get that point very clearly. You see, despite all God's care and love for the peoples and the nations, there are clear hints here that not all is peaceful, not all is as calm as we might think, just reading this chapter.

There are tyrants. There are enemies. There are anti-God cities. And that is part of the story that explains this world.

[24 : 17] The second name, of course, that stands out for us in this list is in verse 25, Peleg. And the footnote there tells us his name means division, for in his day the earth was divided.

That is, it was divided by God as an act of judgment, as we'll see. So again, things are not quite as peaceful, not quite as dispassionate, as this table of nations in chapter 10 alone might suggest to us.

And that points us forward to chapter 11, which spells out the detail, gives us the inside story of this division of the world in Peleg's time.

Notice that Peleg's line doesn't continue here, stops there in verse 25. It's not picked up again until chapter 11, verse 18. And that is because Moses wants us to understand and be clear about this other side.

of the truth about the world. Yes, the world is populated by nations and languages and peoples, all in their allotted places, all under God's care. But that explanation isn't complete until we also take into account God's judgments in history that also explain the world as we know it.

[25 : 38] God has divided the world up among the peoples, but also, we're told here, he has divided peoples from one another in answer to the rebellion and the tyranny and the defiance of mankind against him.

And at key moments in history, God has acted in judgments so that his blessings in this world won't cease and so that his purpose from the beginning to bless the whole world will not be frustrated by the sin and the rebellion of human beings.

And it's that that explains the paradoxes of our world. That it is full of joy and blessing and hopes, but also, it's full of sadness, it's full of miseries, it's full of despair.

Just because it is a world under God's blessing and his curse. And because he does have an ultimate purpose for the peoples of this world, but it's also under his judgment, it's under his curse, because of man's sin.

Now isn't the world that we know and live in and experience, isn't it exactly the kind of world that we would expect for one that is under both God's blessing and his curse?

[27 : 03] Well, that's the Bible's clear assertion at any rate. The world is as we know it to be because it is under the control of a sovereign God.

But of course, at the same time, the Bible will never let us blame God for our world as though it was God's fault. Never. That's why it always insists on another side to all of this that we can't overlook if we're going to understand the world properly.

And the world is as it is, just as truly because of the corruption of mankind. And that's what we see in chapter 11, verses 1 to 9.

If the ultimate explanation of the world lies in God's sovereign purpose, then equally, without question, the responsibility for this world state lies squarely with man's sinful perversity.

The world is as it is today because man's sinful heart has made it that way. Human beings are responsible for the state of this world.

[28 : 14] And that is because of our habitual sin and rebellion against God, against the God whose desire is to bless richly all the nations.

That's perverse, isn't it? And yet it's true. And the truth is that rejection and rebellion against God will inevitably lead to disaster.

Always. And that is the tragedy of the city of man. There are natural consequences for every society that rejects God simply because sin carries within itself the seeds of self-destruction.

But there is also further a judicial aspect. Read Romans chapter 1. The apostle is absolutely clear. It says God gives humanity over to their sinful desires, to their shameful lusts, to their depraved minds in their rejection of Him.

He gives them over in judgment. And that is what Genesis chapter 11 is all about. Because humanity threw up Nimrod and others like Him, tyrants and their empires, God will not stand by and do nothing.

[29 : 30] He will act. And so, says chapter 10, verse 25, in the days of Peleg, the earth was divided. And chapter 11 tells us it was a judicial scattering of people.

It was a judgment of God because of their arrogance, because of their pride, because of their rebellion. It's the sinful corruption in the heart of mankind that is responsible for our broken and fractured and estranged world.

And what we have here is one particular example of what is a perennial reality. That human history is always explained ultimately by the intervention of God in human affairs.

We might not see it, but it's always true. And the story of Babel epitomizes a state of affairs which at real time and in real history resulted in a decisive act of God that shaped and altered all subsequent world history.

But it's not just history, you see, because it holds real and powerful lessons for our world today because in biblical terms, you see, Babel or Babylon is a recurring phenomenon in every age of human history and it will do right until the very end.

[30 : 59] It's the story of the city of man which is at war with the city of God. And it epitomizes for us here the tragedy that is the city of man.

Look at verses 1 to 9 of chapter 11 and just see what the crux of the matter really is here. We saw it hinted at in chapter 10 verses 8 to 12 and again verse 2 makes it absolutely plain.

This is Nimrod's territory. This is the plains of Shinar and its city. This is the place where mighty men were tyrants who were led by a man called We Shall Rebel Nimrod where they show their rebellion against God where they show their disregard for God in all kinds of outrageous ways. And the specific story of Babel you see here is a microcosm of the whole story of man's rebellion. And it's told for us dramatically here so we see it.

Look at verses 1 to 4. This is the nub of the issue very plainly laid out. Here is the deliberate foundation of a society without need of God and without regard for God and in blank opposition to God.

[32 : 09] It's a united assertion of a whole society against God's stated command and purpose for the world. God had said fill the earth cover it.

But look here in verses 1 and 2 what they say is well we don't want to do that we're going to rebel we're going to stay right here in Shinar and build our cities. And you see rejection of God's commands always always leads to that delusion of self-sufficiency.

Verse 3 let's make bricks we can progress on our own you see we've got technology we've got science we've got engineering who needs God? Verse 4 come let's build for ourselves a city not like Noah let us build an ark for God or let's build an altar to God what do they build verse 4?

They build a society that will simply immortalize their own achievements let us build ourselves a city a tower with its top in the heavens let's make a name for ourselves lest we disperse over the earth as God has told us to do.

We don't need God we don't want God and we will ignore God. Well it sounds very like the world as we know it for the most part doesn't it?

[33 : 33] A society that thinks it has no need for God no regard for God opposed to God using technology to defy God to challenge heaven itself isn't that isn't that the history of our world?

Think of language spoken about here which is given by God to man to serve God think of back at the beginning naming all the animals and here now is language being exploited to defy God it's like science isn't it?

which is the language of describing the world harnessing it for good in God's name and yet how often science has been used as something instead to attack God think of all the good from human science think of all the good in medical science for example and yet think also how medical science has been so often turned in abhorrent ways to create harm to do ill to humanity think of all the experimentation on embryos hybrids spare parts crossing humans with animals and so on it's the same in the world of the physical sciences think of all the things that have blessed the world with clean water with transport but they're endless things that the same physical sciences have created weapons of destruction and of mass destruction that's the world as we know it isn't it?

it's the tragedy of the city of man and Babel pictures for us here something that is really very familiar it is a society marked by supreme hubris astonishing arrogance in every area transgressing the divine limits the boundaries between earth and heaven between creator and creatures what kind of society does that kind of thinking lead to if God is utterly rejected and ignored well friends it is not a society of peace and stability it's not the world that John Lennon liked to imagine if there was no God above us just sky and all the people living life in peace is that our world?

it's the very opposite we know that in our world in Genesis 11 is just as plain here Babel here's a city marked on the one hand by megalomania desperate to make a name for itself desperate to find significance and fame and success but on the other hand marked by fear and great insecurity desperate not to be scattered not to be dispersed to shelter within our own city well that rings plenty of bells doesn't it?

[36 : 27] think about the insecurity and the fear of some of the richest people in this world some of the most powerful people in this world who spend fortunes on promoting themselves publicly giving themselves a profile and then have to spend fortunes to protect their privacy and to sue everybody who says things they don't like about them we've seen a bit of that of late haven't we?

think of world institutions and nations and politicians organizations like the EU or the United Nations or the World Economic Forum or anything else with world in its name driven by megalomania great desire for significance for status but at the same time great fear fear of war fear of scattering fear of losing control that's why they're there and that megalomania mixed with fear and insecurity that is a bad bad combination it leads to inherently unstable societies doesn't it?

it leads to inherently unstable personalities and that's what happens because disregard for the right boundaries vertically between God's place and our place always leads to a disregard for boundaries horizontally between humans themselves so instead of all the people living life in peace that really is imaginary we have a world desperately seeking significance in collective unity and yet as one writer says with an insatiable appetite to consume one another that's Babel that's Nimrod's kingdom do you recognize it?

it's a world of tyranny of oppression of exploitation brutality and it's because you can't separate human arrogance on the vertical level we shall rebel against God from human behavior on the horizontal level from human morality and ethics the way we treat our fellow human beings people may try to deny that they do try to deny that but friends morality is dependent upon our view of God it's dependent on true religion and the one true God it's very important that we're we're unafraid to assert that and to stand up to secularist assertions to the country people often say won't they but how can there be a God when the world is as it is?

you see the Bible turns that question around upon us and says how can you expect this world not to be like this when you have systematically abandoned and rebelled against God's laws and God's

command to bless this world let's build our own city our own society without God so God says no adultery in human relationships now we say no no no we want sexual freedom well the appalling consequences are all around us aren't they relationship breakdown family breakdown unwanted babies abortions sexually transmitted diseases on and on or God says no human life is sacred and we say no no no human life is cheap and we want hybrid embryos and we want euthanasia and we want abortion and we want stem cell research but it shouldn't surprise us should it if our newspapers are full of stories about murder about abuse of children about abuse of elderly people in care homes and God says no coveting and we say no no no greed is good and money talks well are we surprised at all the inequalities all the oppression all the slavery all the abuse and exploitation friends the only true humanitarianism is one that acknowledges that humanity is made in the image of God which is why it's so precious and all true morality and ethics flows from [40 : 56] God's commands for human life and God's commands for human flourishing the Bible is very clear godlessness leads to wickedness and John Lennon's view and the view of all so-called humanists is imaginary utterly imaginary it's the Bible's view that is real our world is Nimrod's world he's our patron saint and we shall rebel is our motto but you see like the Babelites we are fools to think that we can challenge and ignore our creator like that look at verse 5 it's the pivot point of this whole story and it reminds us doesn't it that God is not blind that God sees and God acts in judgment at the pride and the arrogance of mankind you see the verse it's heavy with irony isn't it these people think their tower is so impressive it reaches heaven and challenges divinity but in God's eyes it's so small it's so puny and tiny it has to come all the way down even to be able to see it we forget so quickly don't we that as the prophet says we're like grasshoppers in God's sight man pretentiously inflates his ego and constructs his rebellion and God utterly deconstructs his pretensions and he leaves them utterly deflated we'll be settled they say no you'll be scattered says God we'll have one language we'll have a united world no your language will be confused you'll be unable to be united and to rule yourselves

God scatters them and he scoffs at them too and at their city there's a play on words here in the Hebrew to them it was Babilu the gateway to the gods to God it's just Babel a play on the word meaning utter confusion and God judges them in a way that that shaped all subsequent history as he's judged so many times through history when regimes and when empires have reached for the sky but when they've gone too far in challenging the throne of God and that's the real warning to our world to our society to our culture today remember Babel remember the Babylonian and the Assyrian empires once great and mighty but in the end in the dust at the hand of God remember Greece remember Rome remember the Nazi Reich remember the the Soviet Empire remember the British Empire some of you will remember it gone all gone all gone as will disappear the United States Empire perhaps sooner than we think as our western world in general is failing today you see this this message hardly needs to be expounded does it it's telling us beware any society that is bent on usurping the throne of God in self-idolizing arrogance whether it's exploitation of science and genetic engineering whether it's sexual experimentation whether it's military belligerence whatever remember Babel

God is not dead he can see and he will judge when man goes too far in the tragedy that is his city built in defiance of God there is a real warning friends to our world in these pages but there's also a real comfort for the people of faith to know that that evil and arrogant defiance of God will not go on unstopped not forever God is sovereign even over Nimrod's whole domain he sees and in his good time he will act in severe but just judgment but notice that here and this is important notice it is a merciful judgment do you see verse 6 God says he judges in order to stop man's limitless potential for self-destruction nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them unless God scatters them frustrating their unity through confounding their language just imagine if all the worst elements of this world could unite all the despots all the criminals all the tyrants all the terrorists that instead of actually rivaling one another for gain and for territory and for significance and so on they could actually unite it would spell the end of human society human world as we know it global government is not the hope for our world friends the bible tells us it is its greatest threat and that's why here God must judge the world in order to preserve it in order that his promise to Noah to preserve the world and to bless it will stand and that's the tragedy of the city of man of the world as we know it a world full of people desperately seeking identity and posterity a name meaning a sense of transcendence seeking a gateway to the gods but in reality finding no name finding no identity reaping just confusion a world desperately seeking family and belonging one language to

understand one another to find cohesion to find relationships and yet in reality scattered so often in loneliness in isolation a world desperately seeking security a city for us a real home and yet in reality reaping only frustration and insecurity and anxiety the Bible's world is our world it's the world of our newspaper our news screens it's the world that we experience day after day week after week Babel's world is our world and the sovereign hand of God has done it it's all under his control his care but also his curse but the sinful heart of man is responsible for it that's the tragedy of the city of man but of course although it's all here it is only the beginning of the world as we know it's not the end of that story thank God the world is not just a chance happening it can't be explained the world will not always be as it currently is God is sovereign God has a purpose for this world still and that purpose is as unstoppable as it is everlasting and even here in Genesis there are so many hints of that future will God if he really is sovereign will he always put up with a world like this so far short of his ideal well you'll have to come back next week to find out more but for now here is something to think about especially if you're not yet not yet a committed

[49 : 02] Christian believer can you really ignore this book the Bible when it explains so clearly and so coherently as none other can the world as we really know it to be its joys and its sorrows but also its its beauties its horrors its paradoxes can you afford to ignore a book that explains the world like none other can I don't think you can and I certainly don't think you should so I hope you'll think about that this week and I hope you will come back next week and hear more well let's pray we confess Lord the reality of our world which is so full of sinful corruption we confess that it is we human beings who are responsible but we confess also your sovereign control and we acknowledge our responsibility for your your just curse your righteous judgments but we are a people who have hope in your care and in your love which still does have a purpose for all peoples a love that is made known so wonderfully in the giving of your own son to be our savior so help us Lord we pray help us as Christian people to strive to make his name known the name that truly explains this world and the name which alone can save this world and so hasten the day we pray when tragedy will at last be swallowed up in triumph when he comes again to reign so help us to be people of faith and people of truth for Jesus sake

Amen