

12. The Tragedy of the City of Man (2007)

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, do turn, if you would, to Genesis chapter 10 and 11, to the passage that we read. I want to start by asking the question, why is our world the way it is? We live in a world of great contrasts, great paradoxes, don't we?
- It's a world of beauty and of joy and of love. It's a world of creativity and hope and a hope for the progress of humanity. And yet it's also a world of ugliness and pain and hatred.
- It's a world of destructiveness and despair and indeed the regress so often of humanity into inhumanity and into barbarity. That's also all around us all the time, isn't it?
- Why is the world like that, so full of opposites, so marked by paradox? Of course, the view of the modernists of the last century or so was focused on progress, wasn't it?
- A gradual advancement where the world would get better and better slowly until the good overtook the bad and ultimately we would have utopia banishing all these paradoxes.
- [1 : 1 0] But of course, the reality of the 20th century was very different, wasn't it? Two world wars, genocides, horrors, unimaginable. And so that world view, that way of looking at life, isn't nearly so convincing now in the 21st century, is it?
- In the beginning of our century, it doesn't look like changing it very much either. Nowadays, of course, we're told that we're post-modern. We've junked that old modernist view of the world.
- And instead, it's rather fashionable to say, isn't it? That, well, you can't have any real explanation of our world at all. There's no great theory that explains why the world is as we know it. There's no coherence.
- There's no explanation at all. So there's no point in even asking that question. And it's all very well for clever people in universities to think like that and to write like that.
- But it's quite different, isn't it, for real people in the real world to actually live as though there were no ultimate truth, no meaning, no explanation, no purpose in life. Why do we spend so much money on public inquiries to get at the truth, if that's so?
- [2 : 1 8] Why do we spend so much money on a criminal justice system if we don't think truth matters? Of course truth matters in real life. Even if not in the la-la land of the philosophers.
- Real people are always looking for explanations for things. And we need explanations for things, don't we? And here's what the Christian gospel tells us about the world.
- It tells us that only the Bible's view of the world can offer a really coherent explanation of life as we know it to be. Why is the world as we know it to be?
- One of such paradox of beauty and of life and of health and yet at the same time full of national divisions, of interracial strife, of all of these things. Why is it totally unable to be a world of truly united nations?
- Well, the answer to these and so many other of the great questions of life are right here in the very first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis that we're coming back to after our break over Christmas.

[3 : 22] Genesis, you see, is the book of beginnings. It's the book of unfoldings, of all things. It's the book that above all tells us how the world began and how it came to be, the world as we know it to be today.

And above all, it tells us why. But of course it tells us more than just that. It's not only telling us where the world came from, it's telling us where the world is going.

And the Bible, and only the Bible, makes sense of the way the world is. But it's not just history. It's not just recounting and explaining the past and making sense of the present.

It's also gospel. It's unveiling God's plan and his purpose for his world and its people. It's telling us about the future, about where it's going and why.

And if we want to understand life as we know it to be and understand it to be now, and our experience in this present world, then we need to understand God's plan and his purpose from the beginning right to the end.

[4 : 25] And all of that, yes, I would say all of that is right here in the book of Genesis. Now what we've had so far in Genesis chapter 1 to 9 is sometimes called the prehistory.

It stretches right, right back into the mists of time, into the very creation of the world itself. No one really knows how long. And no one was there to write the kind of history that we understand today, modern history.

That's why some of it seems so strange to us. It seems like another world. And in many ways it really was another world. But at chapters 10 and 11 of the book of Genesis, we come to something of a transition.

As I said, book 4 begins at chapter 10, verse 1, and then book 5 begins at chapter 11, verse 10 with the generations of Shem. And that takes us to the end of the first half of those 10 books of Genesis.

Because at chapter 11, verse 27, you'll see book 6 begins with the generations of Terah. And that's the stories of the patriarchs of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

[5 : 31] And all of a sudden we're in a world that's much, much more like a world that we can all readily recognize and understand. It's a world of cities and nations and languages and all these kind of things.

And so these chapters, 10 and 11 of the book of Genesis, are really all about the beginning of the world as we know it. And so we shouldn't be surprised to find in these chapters many of the answers that we need.

Answers that explain the origins of the things that we're so used to in our world today. In a sense, our world does seem sometimes very far removed from the world of Genesis 3, for example.

Or Genesis 6. But it doesn't seem at all far removed, does it, when we read Genesis 10 and 11 and what follows. Because what we begin to see is a world that we recognize, full of peoples and tribes and languages and nations.

It's a world of ambition and distrust and warfare and antagonism between peoples and nations. And these chapters give us the seed, the explanation for why the world has been the way it is ever since.

[6 : 42] The world with all the paradoxes and the contrasts that we find so hard to reconcile. The triumphs as well as the tragedies of the human story. Now we'll need to come back to these chapters next week because there's more to say than we can do in one morning.

But I do want to look at the whole of the section that we read this morning because it's two acts, if you like, of this fourth book of Genesis. And if you want a title, it would have to be this, The Tragedy of the City of Man.

Because it is the beginning of the world as we know it. The world that we all live in. The world that we recognize today. And to understand that world, we have to understand the message of both of these passages.

Both Act 1 and Act 2. We've got to grasp that the world is the way it is because of both the sovereign hand of God and the sinful heart of man.

This world is explained both by the sovereign control of God on the one hand, but also by the sinful corruption of man on the other. So look at first at chapter 10.

[7 : 50] Because this chapter reminds us that this is a world in every respect and in every part under the control of God. The ultimate explanation of everything in this world always lies in God's sovereign purpose.

And the world is as we know it today because God's sovereign hand has purpose that it should be this way. God has overseen every development in world history and he's controlled it all according to his righteous purpose.

And the reason that we find ourselves living in a world of so many paradoxes, so many contrasts, is that this is a world under both God's blessing and his judgment.

It's a world under God's sovereign control, yes, but that control issues in both his sovereign care and his sovereign curse.

And chapter 10 makes both of those things, I think, very clear for us. Let's take the first. God cares for this whole world and all its peoples. And that's very obvious, isn't it, in this chapter.

[9 : 00] God's purpose hasn't changed one bit from his original purpose in creation. Do you remember the original command in chapter 1, verse 28? Be fruitful and fill the earth and subdue it. Remember, he goes back to that same command right after the flood, chapter 9, verse 1.

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Well, under God's gracious, sovereign care, that's just exactly what chapter 10 is spelling out for us.

As we read, chapter 9, verse 19 is the summary from these sons of Noah, the people of the whole earth, were dispersed, the earth was populated. But chapter 10, it shows us the intimacy and the precision, doesn't it, of God's care in working at that blessing.

You see, each individual group, each clan and nation and language has its own territory appointed by God. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the people according to the number of the sons of Israel.

That's how Moses put it later on in Deuteronomy 32 in his song. But that's what he's pointing to right here in detail in this chapter. You can see that repeated little phrase that's there three times for emphasis, verse 5 and verse 20 and verse 31, each with its land and language and clan and nation.

[10 : 26] Now, of course, we are, I think, to read this historically, but of course we're not to read it in an overly wooden or literalistic sense. It's very obviously a stylized list, like so many of the lists of names in the Bible.

You read through, there's exactly 70 names. They occur in multiples, often of seven. Some of them are clearly personal names, but some of them are names of cities. Sidon, or countries, Egypt.

And some of them are nations, the Jebusites, the Hivites, and all the rest of them. But it represents the whole known world in the time of Moses and his heroes, the Israelites.

And it's there to show and to explain the relationships between these different nations as well as their geographical locations. And it does it in that general sort of way.

It's rather like in Britain, we might say, well, you've got the Scots in the north, the English in the south, and the Irish in the west. And that's true, isn't it? But, I mean, somebody might want to be really picky and say, well, actually, you know, if you look at the border, there are parts of the north of England that are further north than the south of Scotland.

[11 : 30] And there are certainly parts of southern Ireland that are further north than northern Ireland because Donegal goes up further north than anywhere else. And, in fact, the east coast cities of Scotland, like Edinburgh, are further west than Manchester and Cardiff.

Did you know that? So if you want to be picky, you could say those sorts of things. But none of us wants to do that. We all understand that if you say Scotland in the north and England in the south and Ireland in the west, we all understand what we mean.

And that's rather what's going on here. It's giving us a clear picture in just a very short compass of a carefully ordered world of people and nations, all of them under God's sovereign control and under his sovereign care.

So first we have these Japhethites in verses 2 to 5. Those are the most distant from Israel, the Greeks and the Medes and the Mediterranean peoples. It's who we spoke about last time.

It's the Gentile peoples of the New Testament. Then lastly, we've got the Shemites, the Semitic peoples of Israel's neighbours in verse 21 and following.

[12 : 38] That's Arabia and Syria. And especially notice verse 25, Eber, from whom the Hebrew people get their name. And then in the middle, of course, we've got the cursed Hamites who are all around the area of Mesopotamia.

Notice who they are. They are all Israel's great enemies, aren't they? Verse 6, Egypt. Verse 10, Babel, Babylon. And verse 11, Nineveh. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

You see, what's being laid out here is the transition from a prehistory into the realm of known history. And what's being shown is that the same clear purpose of God is there all the way through.

God's care for the whole world hasn't stopped. Now that is so vital at this point in the book of Genesis. And Moses is flagging it up for us especially because he wants to remind us of that before the whole story seems to narrow right down and be only interested in one people, one family of the earth, the descendants of Abraham.

Abraham. He's reminding us that God is God of all the earth who cares for all the earth. And that his blessing is a universal blessing. That his care is for all the peoples of the world.

[13 : 54] Every single clan and land and language and nation. That's important. And that's why we find God's blessings in every part and in every culture of our world to some extent at least.

There's joy, isn't there? And love and creativity and beauty in all of our world. And that's what God meant there to be. God himself is the one who has woven the web of diversity among all the peoples of this world.

He's the author of that rich diversity of color and of language and of culture and all sorts of other things. He has poured his own creativity into the whole world and that also includes the world of our human societies.

And that's why it's right that we should rejoice in all the ethnic diversity and cultural diversity in our world. God has ordered it according to his sovereign care.

Of course, we mustn't get confused by that. That's not at all the same thing as saying that we should rejoice in the many false religions of the world.

[15 : 03] Of course not. I read from Acts 17 at the beginning of the service and Paul there is very plain. He said God determined the periods and the boundaries and the dwelling places of all peoples that they should seek God.

The true and only God. Not that they should rebel against him. Of course, that brings us, doesn't it, to the other side of God's sovereign control over the world. Because Genesis is plain.

Men didn't seek God. And despite God's care and his blessing continuing upon the earth, man's sin is also a continuing reality. And the effect of that is a continual blight despite all of God's blessings.

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

See, the Bible doesn't ever hide from the reality of sin and of evil in this world, does it? Many other religions do. Many other philosophies do. But the Bible is plain and honest and facing up to telling us why the world is as it is.

[16 : 11] And we'll get to chapter 11 in a moment, but before we get there, there are two very important clues right here in chapter 10 that flag up for us this darker side of the sovereign control of God over his world.

They flag up for us the reality of his curse as well as his care, his judgment as well as his blessing. I'm sure you noticed as we read the first is in verses 8 to 12 where one name stands out, doesn't it, and gets extended treatment.

Nimrod. What does that name mean? Well, it means we shall rebel. That's pretty significant, don't you think? That's quite a nickname.

Verse 9 tells us he was a mighty man, he was a tyrant. And immediately we're reminded, aren't we, of the great ones, the Nephilim of chapter 6, fierce and fearsome against God.

And, says verses 10 to 12, he was a builder, a builder of cities. Well, it's another very bad omen, isn't it, if you've been reading Genesis? Remember evil, murderous Cain back in chapter 4?

[17 : 16] He had a brother called Abel. Abel was a builder of altars to God. But Cain was a builder of cities to magnify his own name. And look at the names of Nimrod cities.

Babel or Babylon. Now, as you read through the Bible, you will find that that name occurs hundreds and hundreds of times and always it stands for everything that is opposed to God.

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

Now, these were already known and feared in Moses' day and his people, his readers, would have certainly got that point very clearly. So, you see, despite all God's care for people and nations, there are clear hints right here that it's not all just as plain and as peaceful as this table of nations might make out.

There are tyrants, there are enemies, there are anti-God cities and that too is part of the explanation for why the world is as it is. The second name that stands out in chapter 10 is in verse 25, isn't it?

[18 : 35] Peleg. And the footnote tells us his name means division for in his days the world was divided. Divided, that is, by God, in an act of judgment as we'll see.

So, things are not quite as peaceful and dispassionate as a quick reading of chapter 10 might leave us to think. And that points us forward to chapter 11 which spells out in detail the inside story of that division in the days of Peleg.

Notice, as I said, Peleg's family line doesn't continue here, it's only picked up after the story of Babel. And that's because Moses wants us to stop and be clear about understanding this side of the truth about our world as well.

Yes, the earth is populated by nations and languages and peoples all in their allotted place, all under God's gracious care. But the explanation of our world isn't complete there.

not until we understand also that it's God's judgments in history that explain the world as we know it today. God has divided up the world among the peoples but also he has divided up the peoples from one another in answer to their rebellion and their tyranny and their defiance against him.

[19 : 58] And at key moments throughout the history of our world God has acted in judgment and he's done it in order that his blessings might not cease and in order that his purpose right from the beginning to bless the whole world will not be frustrated by the concerted rebellion of man.

And it's that you see that explains the many paradoxes of our world. Why it is so full of blessings and joys and hopes but also so full of sadness and misery and despair. just because it is a world under God's blessing but also under his curse.

And he does have an ultimate purpose for all peoples and nations but also it is under his judgment. Isn't that isn't that true of the world that we know?

Isn't the world as we know it exactly the kind of world we would expect? if it is a world both blessed and judged by God? If it is both under his care and under his curse?

Well that's the Bible's clear assertion. The world is as we know it to be because it is all under the sovereign control of God. Both blessing and judgment.

[21 : 19] Both care and curse. But you see at the same time the Bible will never ever let us blame God for our world as though it was his fault. No.

It always forces us to see another side of all of this. We must never overlook this if we're going to understand our world. The world is as it is just as truly because of the corruption of man.

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

The world that we know is as it is because man's sinful heart has made it this way. In other words human beings today and always are responsible for the state of the world because of our habitual sin and our rebellion against God against the one whose will it is to bless all the nations.

Perverse isn't it? God desires for all the peoples of the world to be blessed and yet all the peoples of the world refuse and rebel against God's desire.

[22 : 40] That's what the Bible means by sin. There's something absurd about it isn't there? And the truth is that rejection and rebellion against God inevitably leads to disaster and that is the tragedy of the city of man.

There are natural consequences that follow from rejecting God because sin carries within itself the seeds of self-destruction. But of course above that there's also a judicial aspect isn't it?

Read about it in Romans chapter 1. God has given us over to our sinful desires, to our shameful lusts, to our depraved minds. And that's exactly what Genesis chapter 11 is all about.

Because humanity threw up Nimrods and others like him, tyrants and their empires, God can't stand by and do nothing. He must act. And so we're told in the days of Peleg the earth was divided.

And chapter 11 tells us that it was a judicial scattering, it was a judgment of God for their arrogance, for their pride, for their rebellion. It's the sinful corruption of the heart of man that is responsible for this broken and fractured and estranged world.

[23 : 58] And that's the truth. You see, what we have here is a particular example of what is in fact a perennial reality through history. That human history is always explained ultimately by the intervention of God in the affairs of men.

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

But it's not just history. It has real and present lessons for our world today precisely because in the Bible's terms, Babel or Babylon is a recurring phenomenon in every age.

And it will be right to the end. The city of man against the city of God. The city of man at war with the city of God. And that epitomizes the tragedy of the city of man.

Look at verses 1 to 9 and just see what the crux of the matter really is here. We saw it hinted at back in chapter 10 verses 8 to 12, but verse 2 you see draws it to us again.

[25 : 10] This is Nimrod's territory. It's the plains of Shinar. Shinar. It's a city where mighty men, where tyrants who are led by somebody called Nimrod, whose name means we shall rebel, where they show that rebellion against God.

And when they show that disregard of God in all sorts of outrageous ways. And the specific story here of Babel is like a microcosm of the whole story of man's rebellion.

It's laid out so dramatically for us here. It's so plain, isn't it? Look at verses 1 to 4. What is the nub of the issue? Well, here is described for us the deliberate foundation of a society without need for God, without regard for God, and in opposition to God.

It's a unified assertion by a whole society against God's plan and purpose for humanity. What had God said? Fill the earth, cover the earth, spread out over all the earth.

And what did they say in verses 1 and 2? We don't want to do that. We're going to rebel. We're going to stay right here in Shinar. It's a rejection of God's command.

[26 : 21] And when you reject God's commands for your life, it always leads us to delusion. We think, we think we become self-sufficient. So in verse 3 they say, let us make bricks.

You see, we can progress on our own. We've got the technology, the science, the engineering. We don't need God. Who needs God? Verse 4, come, let's build ourselves a city. Not like Noah, who built altars for God, who built an ark for God.

What do they build? They build a society that will immortalize themselves in their own achievements. We can reach heaven ourselves, they say, and be our own gods.

So we'll build a tower. We can make a name for ourselves and gain posterity for ourselves. We can find security for ourselves and not be scattered over the earth.

So ignore God's commands for humanity. See, we don't need God, they say, and we don't want God. We'll do it ourselves, our way. Sounds rather familiar, doesn't it?

[27 : 26] Well, it's the world as we know it. A society with no need for God and no regard for God and opposed to God, where technology is put to its use of defying God and even challenging heaven itself.

Isn't that the history of our world? So ironic, isn't it? Language that was given by God to man so that man might serve God, naming all the creatures and so on.

And yet now language is the very thing that's turned to defy God, the one who gave it. Just like science, isn't it? Science is just a language. It's a language to describe the world, to harness it for good.

And yet just think how the language of science has been turned all around to be something that attacks God. Think of its uses in medical science. Think of the vast good of the technology and the science of man that's been used in that way.

And yet just this week, what are we reading about? Well, we've just passed laws to create human-animal hybrids, to grow spare parts, for our bodies. Think of the physical sciences and all the good and use that has been put for the good of man.

[28 : 43] Think also of the great use that's been put to in terms of weapons of destruction and things that self-aggrandize men and nations. It's the world as we know it, isn't it?

The tragedy of the city of man. And Babel pictures something very, very familiar for us. It's a society marked by extreme hubris, arrogance.

In every area, it wants to transgress the divine limits, the limits between heaven and earth, between the creator and the creature. And what kind of society does that lead to?

If God is rejected and ignored totally? Well, it's not one of peace and stability, is it? It's not the society that John Lennon liked to imagine in that ridiculous song, there's no God above us and there's only sky and all the people living life in peace.

That's the very opposite, isn't it? We know that in our own world. Genesis 11 is just as plain. Babel, you see, is marked on the one hand by megalomania.

[29 : 53] They're desperate to make a name for themselves, to get significance and fame and success. But on the other hand, it's marked by fear and insecurity. They're desperate not to be scattered, desperate to be sheltered in this city of theirs.

That's very familiar, isn't it? Think of the insecurity and the fear of the richest and most powerful people in our world who spend a fortune, don't they, on elevating their public profile and then have to spend an absolute fortune on protecting their privacy.

Think of our world institutions, our nations, our politicians, the European Union, the United Nations. On the one hand, it's all driven by megalomania, isn't it?

A desire for significance and status, a name. And yet on the other, it's driven by a desire to avoid fear, to avoid war, avoid scattering, avoid loss of control.

And that's a bad combination. And it leads to inevitably unstable societies. It leads in people to very unstable personalities, doesn't it? And that's what happens, that it's because we've disregarded the boundaries vertically between God and man, and that always leads to a disregard of the boundaries horizontally between human beings.

[31 : 21] So instead of all the people living life in peace, that really is imaginary. We have a world desperately seeking significance in collective unity, don't we?

Yet as one writer says, at the same time, with an insatiable appetite to consume one another. That's Babel, that's Nimrod's kingdom.

But don't you recognize it? A world of tyranny and oppression and exploitation and brutality? And it's because you cannot separate, friends, man's arrogance on the vertical level.

You cannot say we shall rebel against God. You can't separate that from man's behavior on the horizontal level, from our morality and from our ethics, the way we treat our fellow men.

People may deny that, but morality simply simply is always dependent upon religion, on the true religion, on understanding the one true God.

[32 : 25] It's very, very important that we are unafraid to stand up and assert that against the secularist philosophy of this world. See, people always say things like this, well, how can there be a God if the world is the way it is?

There's so much evil in it. But you see, the Bible turns that question right around. And it says, how can you expect the world not to be like this when you've systematically abandoned and rebelled against God's laws and commands for the way human society is meant to be?

God says, no adultery. But you see, we say we shall rebel. We want sexual freedom. Well, is it surprising that we have all around us family breakdown and unwanted babies and abortions and sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS and all these things?

God says, life is sacred. But we say, well, life is cheap. We want to have stem cell research and cloning and hybrid embryos and euthanasia.

Why should we be surprised if at the same time our streets are full of murders, our society is full of abuse of children or the elderly and care homes and all kinds of things like that?

[33 : 39] God says, no coveting. But we say, well, greed is good and money talks. So should we be surprised that we live in a society of inequalities and oppression and slavery in the world more than there ever was in the 18th century?

Well, of course. Because there can be no true morality and ethics apart from acknowledgement of the one true God and his command for the world.

The Bible is very clear. It's godlessness that leads to wickedness. And John Lennon's view and the view of all humanists is, I'm afraid, imaginary.

The Bible's view that is real. Our world is Nimrod's world. It's Babel's world. Nimrod is our patron saint. We shall rebel should be our motto.

But, you know, like the Babelites, we are fools to think that we can willfully challenge and ignore the Creator like that. Look at verse 5.

[34 : 44] It's the pivot point in this whole story. It reminds us, doesn't it, that God isn't blind, that he sees, and that he's still sovereign and that he acts. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built.

Heavy with irony, isn't it? They thought, oh, our tower is so enormous, so marvelous, it reaches to the heavens. God looks down from heaven and says, there's a little speck down there, I can't even see it, I'll have to go down and have a look.

Our greatest things are nothing. Isaiah says, do we not remember that we're grasshoppers in his sight? God sees and he acts in judgment on the pride of man.

And again, it's full of irony, isn't it? Man pretentiously inflating his ego, constructing his city and rebellion. And God just deconstructs all his pretensions.

He leaves them utterly deflated. We'll be settled, says man at the beginning. No, you'll be scattered, says God at the end. We'll have our one language and work together, they say.

[35 : 53] And God says, no, your language will be confused. He scatters them and indeed he scoffs at them and their city. A play on words in the Hebrew in that world.

To them, the Babylonians, the word meant Babilu, the gateway to the gods. But to God, it's just Babel. Utter confusion.

You see, God judged them in a way that shaped all subsequent history. And so he has again and again judged many times throughout our history.

When regimes and empires have reached for the sky, when they've gone too far challenging the very throne of God. Read the Old Testament, you will see it. And read world history, and you'll see it.

And that's why this word is a real warning to our world. It says, remember Babel. Remember Nineveh of the Assyrians, once great and mighty, but in the end, utterly in the dust, before the destruction of God.

[37 : 01] Remember Greece and Rome. Remember the Nazi Empire, the Soviet Empire, the British Empire. They're all gone.

And the message hardly needs expounding, does it? It says to us, beware, beware any society bent on usurping the throne of God in self-serving arrogance.

Whether it's through genetic engineering, or sexual exploitation, or military belligerence, or whatever it is, transgressing the boundaries of God. Remember Babel.

God isn't dead. He can see, and he will judge when things go too far in the tragedy that is the city of man. There's also a comfort, though, isn't there, for people of faith to know that evil and the arrogant defiance of God that is in this world won't go on forever.

God is sovereign even over Nimrod's kingdom. We must remember that. God sees, and in his good time he will act in severe and in just judgment. judgment. And notice that here, and by the way, this is important, notice that here it is still, isn't it, a merciful judgment.

[38 : 24] Verse 6 says that God does this in order to stop man's limitless potential for self-destruction. Nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them unless God judges and scatters them to frustrate their unity, to confuse their language.

change. Just imagine what it would be like, by the way, in our world, if all the worst evil elements in our world could unite together, all the despots and the criminals and the terrorists and the tyrants, all together.

Instead of rivaling one another for self-gain and for aggression, they united together against the rest of the world. It would be pretty grim, wouldn't it? And so God must judge the world in order that his promise to Noah to preserve the world should stand.

And that explains the tragedy of the city of man, the world as we know it. A world full of people desperately seeking identity and posterity, a name, meaning, some sense of transcendence, a gateway to the gods.

And yet in reality, finding no name, no identity, just confusion. A world desperately seeking family and belonging, having one language, to understand one another, to have cohesion and relationships, and yet in reality, scattered in loneliness and in isolation.

[39 : 49] A world desperately seeking security, a city for us, a real home. And yet in reality, a world experiencing only frustration and insecurity and anxiety.

Babel's world is our world, isn't it? The sovereign hand of God has done it. It's all under his control, both his care and his curse.

But the sinful heart of man, oh, that's what's responsible for it. And that's a tragedy of the city of man. But of course, though it's all here, it is only the beginning, isn't it, of the world as we know it?

It's not the end of that story, thank God. The world is not just a chance happening that can't be explained, nor will it always be the way that it is now.

God is sovereign. He has a purpose for it still, a purpose that is unstoppable, and a promise that is everlasting. And even here in Genesis, there are strong hints of the promise of that future, as we've already seen.

[40 : 55] will God, if he really is sovereign, will he always put up with the world the way it is today? Well, you'll have to come back next week to find the answer to that.

But for now, here's something to think about, especially if you're not a committed Christian believer. can you, can you refuse and ignore this book, the Bible, when it explains so clearly and so coherently as no other thing does the world as we really know it to be?

It's joys and it's sorrows, beauties and it's pain. Can you really continue to ignore the only thing that explains the world as we know it?

I don't think you can. I don't think you should. And I hope you will think about it this week, and maybe come back next week to hear some more. But let's pray together now.

Father, we confess before you the fruit of the sinful corruption of our hearts. We confess we are responsible. But we rejoice that this world is under your control.

[42 : 16] Yes, your curse, but also your wonderful care. And we pray that you would guide us to the glory of your promise. That we may be focused on the future that you have also revealed in this book of books.

And that there we may find all that this world longs for and seeks to find, but will never find. That we should find it in the city of God.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.