

One Lord, One Human Race, One Hope

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[0 : 0 0] Father, thank you, Father, that you have given men and women wisdom to be able to put very, very difficult truths and mysteries into words that can help us to try to get our minds around them and to form us.

Father, we're going to read a part of your word now that is very, very challenging to who we are before you. It will challenge, Father, our love of appearances.

And Father, we ask that you would draw us to your word, that you would help us to hear your word, that your Holy Spirit would move to take away the barriers within us that push your word away or think it applies to somebody else other than us.

Father, bring your word home to us. And as you bring your word home to us, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. And this we ask in Jesus's name.

Amen. So the actual text that we're looking at today is Genesis chapter 10, verse 1 to 11, 9. But I didn't have Jeremiah read all of chapter 10.

[1 : 1 0] A part of it is because that's 32 verses on top of 9. That's 41 verses. That's a lot of verses. But the other reason is we should maybe have a little bit of a contest sometime in a church. What is the most boring chapter in the Bible?

And I don't know. Maybe we should do something like that. Christians are allowed to say that. Some parts of the Bible we actually find very boring to read, if we're honest. So maybe we should have a little contest. What do we think is the most boring chapter of the Bible?

I don't know. We could have a little vote afterwards. And I bet a lot of people, if they knew about Genesis 10, they would put that as one of the most boring chapters in the Bible. And so just, if you turn up, we're just going to read two or three verses and you'll see why I didn't have Jeremiah read it.

It's called the table of the nations, by the way. It's Genesis 10. Now this is relevant to the rest of the sermon, by the way, but I just, it says something important. Let's just look. Genesis 10, 1. Here's how it begins.

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, Madi, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiraz, the sons of Gomer.

[2 : 2 0] Ashkenaz. Okay, have I put you to sleep yet? You get my drift. For many of us, this passage of scripture is really boring. And so why on earth would it be in the Bible?

Here's something first to keep in mind. When I first learned how to read, not just a few weeks ago, I was very young, but when I was a child and I learned how to read, shortly after I learned how to read, I discovered Hardy Boy novels.

People, Hardy Boy and Nancy Drew, do they still read that? Like, do millennials still know about that? Sort of maybe, yeah, but so. Anyway, there were like young boys and young girls books. And I discovered Hardy Boy books and I could not believe how fantastic they were.

In fact, I became an evangelist to my family as to why my parents should be reading. Stop reading those books you're reading. You should be reading Hardy Boy books because they're just so good.

In fact, I thought, I actually worried when I went into the store and I saw that there were only like, I don't know, 40 or 50 of them at the time. And I thought, how am I going to read these for the rest of my life if there's only 40 or 50 of them?

[3 : 22] Because I just, I just love them so much. At some point in time, I don't know when it was, it just all of a sudden one day I discovered that I wasn't reading them anymore. I wasn't looking for them in the store. Or I'd moved on to other stuff.

And then, you know, later on, I happened to come across when I was visiting somebody, I was visiting a cottage or something and I took one down and I tried, I could hardly read two pages. It was so childish and boring.

So here's the thing. God didn't write the Bible just for people who are, who have certain types of literary tastes and like certain types of things. He wrote the Bible for everybody.

He wrote the Bible for people in all sorts of different conditions of life. And this long thing of the table of nations, it teaches a very, very simple truth, which it's only sort of a something which seems uncontested by many people in Canada because even people in Canada who don't know that it's ultimately a Bible idea that's sort of in popular culture in Canada, but not all over the world.

And the simple truth, if you could put the first point up, is this. The simple point is that the one true and living God created, sustains, and loves one human race.

[4 : 38] The one true and living God created, sustains, and loves one human race. Now, a lot of us, maybe not you, but a lot of us love statements like that. But for a lot of people, this puts them to sleep.

I mean, if you're trying to communicate to a very young child, maybe, that God loves people from all over the planet, you might say, well, you know what? God loves people from North Korea. And he loves people from South Africa.

And he loves people in Algeria. And he loves people in China. And he loves people in Canada. Isn't that one of the ways that you would maybe communicate to some people, to young children, maybe?

This truth that God loves all people, that there's ultimately only one human race. And that's what the Bible is trying to do here. In fact, it does it also in a very subtle other way.

Just, I know this is a bit of a geek moment, but there's 70 different people groups mentioned if you count them up. And in the Bible, the number seven often represents wholeness and completion. And the number 10 often represents wholeness and completion.

[5 : 39] So for those of you who like number patterns, seven times 10 means completion times completion, which means it's very complete. And it's not that the Bible writers thought that this was the only, that they were exhaustive of every single people group that existed.

It's sort of dynamic. But it's the Bible's one way for the Bible to try to communicate that. And this is very, very important, right? Because as we all know, I mean, look what's going on.

It's like a lot of times famines in Africa and other parts of the world are caused because one tribal group or people group don't care for another people group. And they take the food from them or they keep the food from them.

Or, you know, in our culture, we might think that people who voted for Clinton are way better than people who voted for Trump or the opposite way around. Or the gay community can feel superior over the heterosexual community or vice versa.

That we live in a world where often in our people groups, we think that we're privileged or we're special or we're better than other people. And so this Bible text, which on one hand is boring, is a very, very, very important thing for when we're looking at different people groups, street people, or just people who are very different than us, that there's ultimately only one human race.

[6 : 53] There's only one human race because there's only one God. And the one God who made the one human race has a care and concern for the entire human race and all of its different people groups.

It's a very, very powerful Christian truth, which is why, you know, at the end of the day, part of the reason why, at the end of the day, we send missionaries to Libya and we send missionaries to Angola and we send missionaries to China and we send missionaries to other nations of the world.

Because we have, we should have this basic concern for all people groups. In our community, we should have concern for people groups that are very different than us.

Now, some of you might say, okay, and by the way, I didn't know this up until very recently, but Genesis 10 and the part that Jeremiah read, the Tower of Babel, it's actually all one literary unit.

So here's the very, very interesting thing. You know, it's a very, it's always, it's an interesting question when you're reading the Bible yourself is to ask, well, what follows from this? So in Canada, we now have the story of the, okay, we have this table of the nations, God loves all the people group.

[8 : 05] This is a really good time for us all to stand and hold hands and sing Kumbaya. Or maybe we will all stand and be like good socialist workers and sing the International or We Shall Overcome.

Or maybe we'll have a bit of a care bear moment or something like that. I don't know what, but what's going to follow from this? Maybe, in fact, nowadays, there'd actually be a soft drink commercial, which would somehow connect that all of this differentness is somehow all just one great marketing moment.

So the very interesting thing is, so the Bible uses this very, very, to us boring, but not to everybody, but to us right now, boring way of trying to communicate a very, very important spiritual point.

Now the question is, well, what follows from it? Well, what's going to happen next? Kumbaya, soft drink commercial? We Shall Overcome? What's going to happen? Well, the very, very interesting thing is, is that God moves it in a very, very curious direction that goes, because on one hand, we know that, so we can understand that one human race is not a biological truth, and it's definitely not a sociological truth.

It's ultimately a biblical truth, a theological truth, but what comes from it in a world where there's lots of division? Well, how do we sort of put together all the prejudice and hatred and suspicion that's in the world, and that's where the Bible moves us, and it moves us to the level of the heart.

[9 : 31] So let's now look after this, what could be a Kumbaya moment, what is it that God moves us in to consider, and it's the story of the Tower of Babel. So once again, if you have your Bibles, it'd be really helpful.

Let's look at chapter 11, verse, actually we'll read chapter 10, verse 32. These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to the genealogies, in their nations, and from these nations spread abroad on earth, and from these, sorry, the nations, or the people groups, spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Now, the whole earth had one language and the same words. Now, just sort of pause here for a second.

This is actually really, really important to the story, and it's actually really important for you and me for some of the troubles and problems that we face.

Now, to understand the problem, turn back in your book. So just look, they're traveling together, verse 2, right, and as a people, as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

[10 : 46] So, okay, why is that a bit? Look, turn back in your Bibles to chapter 9, verse 1. And in chapter 9, verse 1, God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

And then there's a bit of an, we talked about this a week ago, other things that are said there. Look at verse 7, it's bracketed. In other words, it's very important because it's said twice and it brackets the other commands.

All the other commands about the image of God, about murder, about the importance of life, they're all bracketed, all to be understood within the context of this basic command. Verse 7, and you be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.

And increase greatly on the earth. In the underlying language, it's the same as verse 7, this idea that you're to increase and spread. So twice God tells them, I want to bless you.

I want to make you fruitful. I want to have you multiply. And I want to have you fill the earth. Now look back at chapter 11, verse 2.

[11 : 56] And as people migrated from the east, they found a place in the land of Shinar and settled there. Now you might be wondering what's going on. Well, here's the point. If you could put it up.

Here's the point. I can appear to be listening to God and obeying him when in reality I am disobeying him. So what could they all be saying?

Well, God, we're moving. We're moving. We're walking. But they're not filling the earth. They're staying together. You see, it's really, really, really, really easy.

It's, you know, probably not much, you know, nowadays, here's one of the things. Nowadays, only weird people go to church on a Sunday morning. I just insulted you all there, by the way. You didn't laugh at it, okay?

But only weird people go to church on Sunday mornings. Because, you know, it probably was in 1957, they might say in the office or at the school, you know, they seem like a really normal person, but they never go to church.

[13 : 09] And now it would be more likely that people say, you know, he or she seems like a really normal person, but, you know, they go to church on Sunday. So it's a bit of an odd thing here, but it's been a case in many, many places of the world, and it still is in some ways, that people come to church because it's a good place to make connections for your insurance business.

Or it's a good place to make connections for your real estate business. You know, in the United States, which has a very, very different, you know, custom, what would Clinton do?

I'm not picking on Clinton. You can multiply this with president after president. What would they do when they're in trouble? They'd go to church carrying a really big black Bible, like two or three times the size of this.

You see, it can look like you're obeying some, but you're not. You know, it can be, it appears if you're listening to God and obeying him, when in reality, you're actually disobeying him.

So they're, in the people, they're moving, but they're not filling the earth. Now, so here's the thing. The Bible's not going to take another bit of a funny turn.

[14 : 24] It's going to say, well, why is this sort of going on in their lives? You know, we are addicted to the fact that maybe if they just had like a better church, if they had a better preacher, if they had better education, maybe if they had a little bit of therapy to deal with some of the wounds of their family of origin, if we just did a few couple of things and maybe they would fix it and they would be better.

But the Bible actually points out here that there's something at a far deeper level, at a heart level, which is relevant to you and me. It's all very interesting. See, one of the reasons why in Sunday school and reading the Bible, it's so important to know stories like this, is that the stories like this in the Bible go along with the different other types of moral teachings and stories have an ability at some point in time to start to touch our hearts and help us to realize something that's going on deep inside.

Look at verses three and four to see the very funny turn it takes. We'll read verse two again. 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, which is a type of tar 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.

[15 : 55] So remember in chapter nine, twice, God says, I want to bless you. I want to make you fruitful. I want to multiply you. And I want you to fill the earth.

And they here, just think about this for a second. How many of us would like it if God all of a sudden just appeared before us and said, well, I'll use myself as an example. George, I want to bless you.

George, I want to make you more fruitful. George, I want to multiply you. George, I want you to do this. Now, here's the thing. It's a very, very, very important thing for us to understand about ourselves and how we read the Bible.

If you could put this next point up here. I easily hear God's word of blessing as a threat. Maybe I'm the most wicked person here, but I easily hear God's word of blessing as a threat.

See, look at this here again in the text. Did you notice it in verse four? 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 earth.

[17 : 01] What God tells them he's going to do in terms of blessing them and making them fruitful and multiply and filling the earth, they interpret that as a threat. You see, here's the thing.

This is a constant problem with us, not only when we're reading the Bible. It often influences the way we read the Bible because we're trying to take things out or blunt it or ignore it or whatever.

Like, you know, for very many of us, it's just, you know, I was just trying to explain just a little while ago to somebody about the importance. In fact, I've had several conversations in the last month about the importance of forgiveness.

And I know there's lots of, there's a lot of false info around what the Bible means by forgiveness. But when the Bible talks so much time and time and time and time again about the importance of forgiveness, we sort of feel that if we forgive, it's going to make us weaker.

It's going to make us weaker. It's not going to help us. You know, one of the problems for, I'll just use one example, but a lot of problems for young women is they might start to date a young guy and they'll feel that if they don't sleep with him, he won't stay with them.

[18 : 20] And they don't trust that God's word about sexual faithfulness is actually for their good. You know, we hear the constant biblical teachings on financial generosity and it's all in the context of how being more financially generous will make us feel more free.

It will help us to take the idol of money off our back. How God will provide for us. It doesn't say give to me and I'll make you rich, but you'll understand and see even more deeply how I am your great treasure, how I will provide for you.

But we hear these teachings and we experience them as a threat. Many people thought, you know, just to think that God actually caused the words in the Bible to be written.

That at the end of the day, not by mechanism, but that every word that there is in the Bible is a word that God ultimately wanted to have there. And when we read the Bible, we are face to face with God speaking to us.

But for many people inside the church and out, that is a threat. Not a blessing. And that's all captured here in this very, very, you know, in fact, if you think about it for a second, verse four, look at verse four again.

[19 : 37] Couldn't verse four be a motto for just about every social movement, ideology, and country in the planet throughout all of history? 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.

You see, here's the other thing. You know what that thing, what's motivating them to stay together, what's motivating them to hear God's word as a threat is their anxiety and their fear.

If you put up the next point, please, as you put it up, one of the things, I don't do much counseling, but I do a little bit and one of the things which I constantly come across as I talk to people is how most, many, many, many, many people aren't entirely honest or aware of the deep level of stress and anxiety that's in their life.

In fact, sometimes what I'll have a person do is just sort of try to articulate the different things that are going on in their lives that, in fact, always cause stress.

And a lot of times, we're blind to our own stress and we're blind to the amount of anxiety that we're carrying around with us. Where if we're aware of it, it's just something we don't want to share because Christians somehow or another aren't supposed to be anxious.

[21 : 05] We're supposed to have the joy of the Lord as our strength. But what we see here is that they name it, they don't sort of do anything, but what they do in the face of their anxiety and their fear is, and this is what we do as well, in vain we seek proud dreams, fortresses, and the scaling of heaven as antidotes to our anxiety and fear.

This is what goes on in many of our lives. At some time in my life, I had some addiction issues which I had to deal with. And it was hard even to come to the terms with the fact that I had some addiction issues which I had to deal with.

And maybe this is just for those of us who struggle with or have struggled with some addiction issues. One of the things that goes along with those of us like that is that we love proud dreams.

The strong man, the guy or the gal who has the right answer, the competent one. And we have proud dreams and we retreat to them in the face of the stress and anxiety and failures that we're surrounded with.

And we try to build fortresses, maybe fortresses of wealth or fortresses of degrees or fortresses in terms of a perfect front. And sometimes we try to scale heaven by trying to look like we're way more righteous than we are.

[22 : 30] And that's just in our personal lives. And the fact of the matter is is that when I pursue idols, when I pursue proud dreams, when I pursue fortresses, all I end up really doing is making myself more anxious.

And countries and cultures, the reason I'm using the word fortress here, by the way, is that if you look at verse four again, then they said, come let us build ourselves a city. The word for city is the same word for fortress.

What they wanted to build was a fortress. They weren't trying to build the Glebe. They weren't trying to build Westboro. They weren't trying to build New Edinburgh or Rockcliffe or Manick.

They were building a place with a big, strong, powerful wall which would keep them safe. In vain, in other words, it's futile.

We seek proud dreams. We seek fortresses. We seek to scale the heavens as antidotes to our anxiety and fear, but they don't work.

[23 : 41] So, now here's the big question. What is God going to do about this? Like, what's God going to do about this? The question, the thing has been set.

I don't know. I mean, a lot of us, the type of God that we want is a God who's very, very permissive, like our favorite uncle who will just sort of nod and say, well, I know you've been a little bit naughty, but off you go.

And sometimes, especially when it's things which are very close and dear to us, we want to have, you know, we want to really punish. We want to really hurt. You know, sometimes we want to mock.

Sometimes we want to show scorn. Sometimes we're afraid of what's going on. So, it's always very interesting. The Bible's now set up this situation. The people are disobeying God.

They appear as if they might be obeying God, but really they're disobeying God. There's fear and anxiety which is driving them. They're trying to reach heaven. They're building fortresses.

[24 : 41] They have proud dreams. So, what's God's response going to be? Like, in a sense, when we see what God's response is going to be to this, it gives us a bit of a clue as to how God's response is going to be to you and me when we do the same types of things.

So, look at verse 5. And the Lord God and the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built.

Look at that. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. Now, it used to be for many, many, many years when I read this part of the Bible, it used to actually frighten me.

Maybe it's just because I'm weird. But I didn't like this language because it made it look as if God didn't know all things and wasn't all powerful. That he actually had to come down to see it and to deal with it.

But here's what the text is actually trying to communicate to us. It's a bit of irony. Here they think that they're using bricks and they're going to build a fortress and they're going to build a tower that will take them all the way up to where God is.

[25 : 54] And the very, very subtle irony isn't that God is an omniscient. He already knows what's going on. But he says, you know what? That thing is so far away and so itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny, tiny that I can't even see it.

That's what the text, it's irony. We think, whoa, look how great we are. Look how fantastic things are. Look, look how much we are like making heaven on earth.

Look how progressive we are. Look, look at our empire. Look at our philosophy. Look at our music. Look at our religion. Look at our rituals. Look at our, look at our yoga techniques.

Look at the things that we're doing. Look how high they are. God obviously must be impressed. And in this story, God's saying, wow, is there something going on down there? It's so far from me. I can hardly see it.

I guess I better get closer to look. That's what the text is doing. If you could put up the next point. No human edifice, that's something that we create, of the body or the soul, of the mind, the heart, or the will, can scale heaven.

[27 : 08] You can do yoga and become the best yoga person in the world. You can learn meditation techniques. You can learn all of the Islamic prayer techniques, and you can do it five times a day, and you can do all of those other types of things.

You can learn religion and creeds. You can learn all about gender theory. You can learn about Marxism. You can learn about science. You can learn about technology. You can be a progressive nation and make our military 20 times stronger to make sure that progressive values triumph throughout the entire world.

But any attempt to think that we are making heaven on earth, that we are scaling heaven, it won't work.

Could you put up the next point? It's another way of saying the same thing. The Lord must come down and in. By my own power, I can never get up and out to him.

I need God to speak. Remember, one of the things about the Christian faith, which is really, really important for us to understand, is that we Christians are not saying that our philosophy or our religion is better.

[28 : 25] We are not saying that when you look at Genesis or you look at Mark or Luke, that you've never seen anything which has been written better than this, that you've never seen anything from our tribe.

Our tribe has the smartest writers, the most profound insight to religion, the most profound insight to God. That is not what Christians are saying. Christians are saying as all of our attempts to scale heaven will fail.

God must break in. God must speak. Our wisdom is in being receptive and listening, not in our assertions.

At the end of the day, the gospel is one beggar telling another beggar where free bread is available. It's not us saying, look, I'm the best baker in the world. I'm the most spectacular baker.

It's not that. It's never that. One more point, if you could put it up. All attempts to reach God on my own terms and by my means will fail.

[29 : 31] See, their terms in the story are, we're not going to, you know, if we scatter and disperse, we're going to become weak. We're afraid of that. We don't really trust that God really wants to bless us.

I don't know what it is, but we just don't trust it. So we're going to make a fortress. We're going to try to scale heaven. We're going to bring heaven down and us to heaven and heaven to us. We'll have heaven on earth. We'll be behind our fortress.

We'll all be together and we're going to bless ourselves in our own terms. We're not going to listen to what God says. We want to improve upon what God says. We want to add to it. We want to subtract to it. We want to do our things in our ways with our conditions.

And the Bible is saying it will always fail. It will always fail. Some of you might remember, I've shared with you before that when I became a Christian, I was in grade 12.

And over the next six or seven years, I had quite a few very major crises of faith where I almost left the Christian faith. And, you know, I had a very secular education.

[30 : 38] I went to the public school system, went to university where I majored in sociology with a minor in philosophy, did graduate work in sociology, then went to a very, very, very liberal secular school to study theology and to study counseling.

I've never had, for any of my training, a professor who was an evangelical Christian, a Bible-believing Christian, never had one the entire time. And there were lots and lots of moments and times and seasons in my life where I almost threw in the towel with everything.

But one of the things, in a very odd way, one of the things which really helped me was something I read, I don't know, I think I was in university when I read it, and it was, I read several books by Dostoevsky, a 19th century Russian writer.

And one of the things which he said, I think it's in the, I can't remember the, I think it's in the devils, but I can't remember now which one of the novels it was. He said, no, I think it's in the Brothers Karamazov.

If God is dead, all things are permissible. If God is dead, all things are permissible. The struggle that I always had in my Christian, when I was trying to figure out whether I was going to leave the Christian faith or stay a Christian, my problem was never that I was going to become a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Jewish or a Muslim, because I, fundamentally, I had no interest in religion.

[32 : 06] For me, the great danger was always atheism and nihilism. That's just me. People have different things which are their tensions. And I have always thought that that statement by Dostoevsky, that if God is dead, all things are permissible, is an unanswerable statement.

I still think that. That if, in fact, there is no God, there is no particular reason other than pragmatism for me not to do whatever I feel like doing, whatever I can get away with.

That basically, the entire moral world is grounded in the reality and existence of God. It actually, thinking of things in stark terms, helped me to understand the cost and ultimately, actually, ultimately, the naivety and the foolishness of many of the things which were criticized in Christianity.

It ended up helping me to see the wisdom and the beauty of the gospel and the Bible. And in this simple story here, a similar statement to Dostoevsky is actually part of how God responds to what they're doing.

It's, look at verse 6. Actually, so we'll verse 5 again. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. And verse 6, 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 propose to do will now be impossible for them.

[33 : 50] And I have to confess that for many years I was puzzled by this because I thought it was telling me that somehow or another they were going to reach heaven and they could do anything they wanted.

But God isn't talking about that. I mean, the text actually, when I've, as I read the text far more carefully and I saw the irony that here they think they're making this huge edifice and they're making this heaven on earth and they're reaching and scaling heaven and God is sort of saying there's something so teensy-weensy and far away from me and completely and utterly down there that I have to come down to see it that what he's talking about isn't that they actually reach heaven but they believe they've reached heaven.

They believe they've reached their heaven on earth and are one with the gods and with their one language and this one belief nothing that comes into their hearts that are in rebellion against God will be seen as impossible or wrong.

It's describing Nazi Germany. It is describing the Soviet Union under Stalin. It is describing Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.

It is describing North Korea and it is potentially increasingly describing our own country as our own country increasingly comes to the awareness that there is no God and they can do whatever they want.

- [35 : 29] And when people believe there is no God that they're bringing heaven to earth that they can do whatever they want to bring heaven to earth and earth to heaven ordinary people die.

ordinary people die first individually then by the truck load then by the train load then by the killing fields load with the help of bureaucrats with the help of technology nothing will be impossible to them.

no basic decent moral virtue will say to them that is a step too far.

When I said that verse 4 could be the motto of virtually every nation verse 6 can also increasingly be the motto for Canada and has been the motto for many nations throughout history.

So how is God going to deal with all of this? How is he going to deal with this? What will he do? Look at verses 7 to 9.

- [36 : 43] 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 or Babel. Because Babel means confusion. 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.

If you could put up the point in his mercy and compassion he came down to judge and bless. That's what God does in this story.

In his mercy and compassion he came down to judge and to bless. he judges. He does not in his he blesses them.

He does not want to see that anything will be nothing will be impossible to whatever the imaginations of their hearts desire that nothing will stop them from doing the imaginations of their hearts.

- [37 : 48] It's a judgment but at the same time it's a blessing because he does not want to see that because he loves all of the nations of the earth and all of the people group and his desire is that God takes no delight in the death of a sinner but rather that they will turn from their wickedness and live said many many times in the book of Ezekiel and reminded of us when we read and do morning and evening prayer and so God does an act of judgment by giving them many different languages and their own sinful desires to have their own way and to have their rule work when they can no longer speak to each other means that they start to leave each other and breaks the whole project it has it completely and utterly fall flat but at the same time it's an act of compassion why is it well not only that he spare them from a fate of a land where people will do whatever the evil is whatever comes into the inclination of their hearts but at the same time what was it that he said in chapter 9 in chapter 9 he says

I want to bless you I want to make you fruitful I want to multiply you so go throughout the earth and fill the earth and what happens at the end of the story God sends them throughout the earth in other words he's saying to them my fundamental desire to you to bless you to make you fruitful to have you multiply as you fill the earth that's still my heart for you that is still my heart for you that is still my heart for you let's just wrap it up if you could put up the final point obviously for those of us who know the Bible a little bit there's obvious resonances in this story with what goes on in the rest of the Bible Jesus invaded to die he died to save he saved to give he gives till he returns you know it's really interesting you look over this that for Christians this is pointing this story of Babel is pointing to when

God will come down and in a sense invade in a very very final and divine and a very very final way that starts to bring about the end of history and if you think about it it's just so funny that here we have the mighty Roman Empire the greatest empire on the face of the planet, the greatest empire the world had seen at that point in time, so important for law, for art, for culture, for a whole pile of things, for its military might.

And how does God invade? As a baby. But it's an invasion. He invades, we would want to invade with dragons, monsters, drones, X-Men or Avengers, huge flying fortresses.

That's what we want to do. But God invades as a baby. And he invaded to die. The entire, we, when we think of invasion, and even when we're thinking of our fortresses, when we're thinking of our cities, when we're thinking of our proud dreams, how we can have these cutting comments, how we can be looked up to, how we can be seen to be great, and we can be putting people down, and that's sort of part of the desire and the cry of our heart, but God invades to die.

[41 : 21] We want to diminish others. God came and diminished himself. He invaded to die, and we understand that his death upon the cross, the invasion of God, the coming down of God, is a coming down to save.

In fact, when it says in the creed that Jesus tastes all there is to taste of death, even to the point of hell, it's saying that the descent of God, the Son of God, to save human beings goes down and down and down and down and down.

And there is no human being on the face of the planet. There is no human being here today. No matter how deep your despair, no matter how deep your shame, no matter how deep your sin, no matter how deep your brokenness, no matter how deep your addictions, no matter how deep your poverty, that God, the Son of God, has not gone deeper still so that he might take you in his arms and raise you up.

He invaded to die. He died to save. He saved to give. In the cross, we see not only that Jesus takes upon himself that which keeps us far from God, we also get his perfect obedience and righteousness, but this also points to a second invasion that is a fruit of Jesus' death upon the cross, which is, of course, the story of Pentecost.

In a sense, in a new age of the Holy Spirit, the invasion of the Holy Spirit, and as the Holy Spirit comes, the nations of the world are gathered in Jerusalem, and now the Holy Spirit comes, and the heart of it is that they hear in their own heart languages one message of God's mighty acts to save.

[43 : 07] He invaded to die. He died to save. He saved to give not only his own life but the Holy Spirit, and he continues to give this salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit until he returns.

We live in the already not yet. We live between the invasion where he comes down to save and the invasion whereby he will bring all things to their proper end and make the new heaven and the new earth.

Please stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we confess before you that there are parts of your word that you have only written because you want to bless us, because you want us to be fruitful, because you want us to multiply, because you want us to be free, because you want us to be whole, and we confess to you, Father, that there are parts of your word that when we read them, it does not make us feel any of these things, but we feel threatened.

And we confess before you, Father, that there are many ways that we can put on masks and appear to be far more righteous and holy and spiritual than we really are.

And we confess this before you. And we confess before you, Father, that often when we speak to you, we want you to do things and make changes in our lives in our own terms, because we don't trust you.

[44 : 50] Father, we thank you so much that you do not wait for us to be perfect before you love us. But, Father, you know the permutations and the fears of our hearts, and yet you love us.

And yet you died, you had your son die on the cross for us. We thank you, Father, that his sacrifice is perfect and complete, his obedience is perfect and complete, that we cannot add to it or subtract to it, and that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, his perfect covering of our sin and shame and his perfect obedience becomes ours.

Father, grip us with the gospel. Grip us with who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross. Grip us with the gospel so that as we read your word, we're gripped by the gospel, we start to lose our fears of your word, that we have the courage and the freedom to follow and to trust that you who sent your son to die, whose righteousness is perfect and complete for us, is the same one who speaks through these words.

Father, make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, learning to live in freedom for your glory. And this we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.