

98-08-16b

As we resume our study this morning in Genesis, we begin now at chapter 11, which is one of the more famous sections of Genesis. I think most people who, even if they are not Christians or have only a glancing familiarity with the Bible, are aware of this particular story. But in verses 1 through 9 of this chapter, it seems relatively short for as notorious as it is, but we find the following.

Genesis 11, 1, Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. Right away we know that we have backtracked, don't we? Because he's told us two or three times in the previous chapter that these nations and families divided according to their languages. But here we're backtracking.

The whole earth had one language and one speech, and it came to pass as they journeyed from the east. And of course, when it says the whole earth, earth here is put for, this is a metonymy of the adjunct or whatever figure of speech you want to call it, the whole earth, this is the whole race of mankind at this point in history. The reason that is important is when we go back to revisit verse 25 of the preceding chapter, when it says, in Peleg's day, the earth was divided.

Was this the physical ground in terms of the continents splitting apart, which I have sometimes thought, or is this the whole earth as we find it in 11.1, the earth in terms of the races of mankind? Could it be that this that we are about to see in Genesis 11, 1-9 is in fact what is being alluded to in 10.25, when the whole earth is divided. Here you have the whole earth united. These are probably linked.

Peleg is about five generations down from the time of the flood, the time of the emergence from the ark. He's fifth generation. Looking at the mathematical possibilities here, there could be, people have estimated, there could be as many as 30,000 people on the earth by the time you get to the fifth generation.

So this is a reasonable number to fulfill everything that we see in this chapter. On balance, I think, based on the language of 11.1 and its similarity to 10.25, that although in former days I thought, well, this was the continental drift and so forth, I tend to think that probably 10.25 and 11.1 are telling us about the human race. The whole earth had one language and one speech, and it came to pass as they journeyed from the east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

If you look at the position of the Ararat mountain range, you travel east and somewhat south, you find the area of modern-day Iraq, the plain of Shinar. See, here's another application of these things. Even at this late date, do you want to really be friends with the Iraqis? Probably not.

They found this plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one

another, Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

And the Lord said, Indeed, the people are one, and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do. Now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth, and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. As we have noted several times already in Genesis and elsewhere in the Scriptures, we find here, once again, a great example of chiasm, chiasmus, where we have brackets within brackets within brackets centering on an important point.

And we'll see a little bit more about that as we examine the details. But the whole earth had one language and one speech. It came to pass as they journeyed east, they found the plain, they said in verse 3, Come, let us make bricks.

What's the problem in the plain? You don't have building materials. You don't have granite or gypsum or whatever you might need, marble, to do like the Romans and the Greeks will do later on and chisel these stones and build Colosseums and Acropolises and so forth. They're out where it's basically a great plain where there's probably a large deposit of mud.

So they say to one another, Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. I wish that we could all stop and take a couple of years of Hebrew and then come back to Genesis. There are so many things that pop out at you when you look at these verses in Hebrew all the way from the beginning of Genesis.

There are word plays and there is such a beauty in the literature that's impossible, I think, to fully recapture when you translate it over into English. But even in the English, when you look at verse 3, does this remind you of anything? Come, let us make? God, back in Creation Week, said, Let us make man in our own image after our likeness. What is man going to do here? When God says these words, the result is this incredible thing called human life.

When man says the words, he's using the same material, isn't he? God formed man out

of the dust of the earth. Man is going to take the dust of the earth and what's he going to make? He's going to make sun-baked brick. The comparison between God and man who is in the image of God is ironic.

Both have the power of creation, but man in his fallen state, man here with the foreshadowing of bad things to come, takes the dust of the ground and says, Come, let us make bricks. And in some ways, you get the satirical idea here that the man that God has made from the dust of the ground has himself turned to something of a brick in his thinking. Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.

In Hebrew, this is literally, let us brick bricks and let us fire them with fire. These are doublets of noun and verb combinations that come from the same root. So, let us brick bricks and let us fire them with fire.

This is the overcoming of a big problem. There are no building materials in the region and so man's ingenuity solves that problem. Let's make bricks.

Let's fire them with fire to solidify them and make something that did not exist before. So they had brick for stone and they had asphalt for mortar. And there's some wordplay going on here that I won't go into, but it's very interesting because the word for stone and the word for asphalt are very similar.

And they said in verse 4, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. Now, this is in direct contradiction to God's charge, both to Adam and later to Noah.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth. Here, in opposition to the divine call, the divine design, man says, let's make a name for ourselves so that we will not be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. Once again, our knowledge of ancient history and ancient mythology helps us out here because this story is set in the plain of Shinar and it is the origin of the city of Babel, which is in fact Babylon.

The ancient Sumerian, the ancient Mesopotamian mythology had a story of Babylon as being the oldest city in the world. It was very interesting because that city in their storytelling was a city that had been built by the gods and had descended down from heaven to rest on the earth, sort of along the lines of the ending portion of Revelation where the heavenly Jerusalem, which has been built in the heavens, descends and is planted on the earth. Well, this is what the Babylonians thought of their city.

They said this city was built by the gods and descended down onto the earth. They considered it to be the oldest city, the original city, which in some ways it is because Nimrod is the founder of Babel and the kingdom that grew up around it. And in his pride and in his hubris, he does all of these... You get the idea from the description of Nimrod

in the last chapter, verses 9-11, that he is pretty proud of himself.

He has a lot of human accomplishments. He has descended from Ham through Cush. And because of his might and his extraordinary abilities as a hunter and as a builder and so forth, he seems to have been possessed of extraordinary physical strength.

We wonder if when speculating about, and it is speculation, about the origin of giants and the Anakim and so forth that Israel will encounter later on, if there was some survival through the flood of some of this genetically different material that came from the angels or whatever, who would be most likely to have married one of these ladies? We know that this would have had to come through one of the wives of the sons of Noah because Noah is perfect in his generations and we know that Shem is likewise. Therefore, it can't be Noah or Mrs. Noah. So if there is survival of some of this physical union of man and angels, where would it come? And the sons are all going to be pure, so it has to be one of the wives.

Well, of the sons, knowing something of their nature now, which one of the daughters-in-law of Noah is most likely to have been one of these mixed individuals? Probably Ham's wife. Interestingly, Nimrod and these that are founding these cities and doing these mighty things are not descended through Canaan, who we believe to be descended from Ham and Mrs. Noah, but rather through Cush, who is a natural son of Ham, with Mrs. Ham. So if Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, from Ham's natural marriage, is a throwback perhaps to some of this pre-flood union, you have then the survival of some attributes that could bring about extraordinary physical strength, extraordinary physical size, and so forth, which can survive all the way down to the days of the Philistines and the giants, the last of whom seemed to be exterminated in David's day, Goliath and his brothers.

That, I will say once again, to remind you, is pure speculation. I would not die for that by any means, but there is the possibility at least. Anyway, you have this... The one thing that is clear from Scripture is that these things are done in self-sufficiency.

These things are done independently of God, independently of interest in God. They're done... This whole Babel, Shinar business is instigated by the Hamites. Nimrod is the one who goes and starts the city of Babel and all of these other towns, Erech, Akkad, Kalna, in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod is the Moses that leads the people away from Ararat down to Shinar. He's the big cheese. He's the mighty hunter before the Lord.

He's the founding father, the George Washington of the Shinar population. So, we know already that this bodes no good. They come to... And by the way, proceeding to the east always seems to be a negative thing.

You think about our other... The significance of directions. Is it significant at all that they

travel east to Shinar? It is. It seems to be a negative thing when you head east.

When the glory of God departs the temple, it's traveling east. When David is driven out of Jerusalem, he's going east. The positive things come out of the east to the west.

Jesus enters Jerusalem from the east traveling west. The glory of God returns to the temple from the east headed west. So, there is... This goes all the way back to the days of Eden when Adam and Eve are driven out of the garden, they have to go eastward.

When Cain has to leave their area, he travels even further east. So, east is sort of like the left hand, if you will. If you are God, seated in the sides of the north, and you're looking down at the land of Palestine, your left is east, is the east, the way the people are going to see it.

And this idea survives all the way down in your chivalry and so forth. The names for the right hand and the left hand, what's the name of the right hand? That's Dexter. What's the name of the left hand? Sinister.

Well, the left hand is the eastward side from God's perspective. So, a little side note there. They journey east, and they found the plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

I think it says in the New King James they journeyed from the east, but this is actually journeying toward the east. So, they had the brick and the mortar, and they said, let us build a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens. The idea is this is going to be like nothing that has ever been built before.

There were some pre-flood buildings and cities and so forth, but this is something new, this giant tower. Of course, they have excavated in Iraq, in the vicinity of Babylon. They have uncovered ziggurat foundations there and up at Ur and various other ancient civilizations.

Well, this is the prototypical ziggurat. This is the first big, archetypical ziggurat. Its purpose is astrological observation.

These things were oriented toward the stars and the constellations and were used for astrology and soothsaying and prognostication and so forth. Seeking truth apart from God. Seeking revelation of the future.

Will we have good crops this year and so forth? It's all independent of God. The purpose is to be united, to have a single place of residence, one world government right there. And this reminds everyone who hears this story in the ancient world about the actual Babylonian myths and legends that talked about how the gods got together and built Babylon as a reward when Marduk defeats Tiamat and one thing and another.

It all comes down and this is the first city and the great city and how wonderful it is and it has a heavenly origin and it has this tall ziggurat that reaches back up to heaven and it's the place of residence of the gods. It's an anti-Jerusalem. It's an anti-New Jerusalem at the beginning of history that oddly reflects in a distorted way the truth about the New Jerusalem that will occur at the very end of human history.

And so this story, when the Genesis record sets this straight, really lets the air out of the Babylonian balloon because it says, no, your city wasn't built by the gods. No, it didn't descend out of heaven. It was built by men and it rose up out of the mud and it was the product of arrogance.

It was the product of the desire to be independent of God, to thwart the divine purpose, to ignore the divine revelation, to seek man-made solutions to man's problems, to operate in human strength for human goals and human purposes in complete independence and in the rebellion against God. That's what this city represents. It is not the culminating crown and glory of the gods.

It is the crowning expression of hubris and evil pride on the part of man. So the Genesis story acknowledges that there are other accounts of how these things took place in the Sumerian Babylonian legends, but it sets that record straight and is a big slap in the face, if you will, to the arrogant, self-indulgent mythology of Babylon. And you see this in verse 5, because what does it say? They're baking these bricks.

They build this huge tower. They're constructing it. It's going to have its tops in the heavens and they're real proud of it and everything.

They think that this is the crowning achievement. Nothing like it has ever existed before. But what does it say in verse 5? In order to even see this monumental work of man, God has to come down.

It is so far beneath God that it isn't that God is nearsighted, but this is an indication of how paltry and insignificant this great work of man is. To even see it, God has to descend. How close have they actually gotten to the heavens? Well, not very close at all, because God says, well, I'm going to have to go down.

I'm going to have to descend a long ways down here to even see this little microscopic dot. And even today, if you think about the size of planet Earth and the relative size of this little ziggurat, I mean, it isn't even a blemish on the surface of the Earth. So God came down.

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And this is bene ha-adam, the sons of Adam, or the sons of the Adam. And this is one of the places where you have to make an interpretive choice.

Is this the sons of Adam or the sons of man? Sons of the Earth in some cases. Adam or

Adamah is used for the Earth. And all of these things, there's a wordplay going on here because this is what has become of the sons of men.

Here's their paltry little exercise in trying to create something from the dust of the ground. God has to descend to even see it. And this is the city and the tower which the sons of men have built.

And the Lord said, And indeed, the people are one, and they all have one language. And this is what they begin to do. Now, God didn't create the confusion of languages until this episode.

He didn't just have them naturally diverge and scatter on their own. It's a result of this episode. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with one language and one speech.

In fact, it can be a very good thing. And if you want to look at the great grand chiasm in human history, turn with me over to Zephaniah. I'm so pleased to be able to say that.

How often do you get to go to Zephaniah? It's about the third or fourth book from the end of the Old Testament. Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Go back to Zephaniah.

We want to look at chapter 3 and verse 8, beginning at verse 8. This, once again, the first part of this chapter has been talking about the wickedness and the intransigence of Israel and Jerusalem. He has warned them. He has blessed them.

He has cajoled them. He's humored them. He's stretched out his hands all day long to a disobedient, stiff-necked people.

And you see in the beginning of chapter 3 there, Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted to the oppressing city. She has not obeyed His voice. She has not received correction.

She has not trusted in the Lord. She has not drawn near to her God. This echoes what has happened in the early days of the human race, and particularly this mass migration to the plain of Shinar.

It's the same idea, the same attitude. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning.

The prophets are insolent, treacherous peoples. Her priests have polluted the sanctuary and done violence to the law. The Lord is righteous in her midst.

He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light. He never fails.

But the unjust knows no shame. That's what we have today. There is no shame attached

anymore to things that are immoral, to things that are grossly wrong and evil, to the immorality that is a reflection of breach of promise, breach of marriage vows, breach of proper conduct just in the realm of how people treat other people.

And in our day, it's almost insolent in the lack of shame. It's considered acceptable now that we have incidents where bad things are engaged in by people in high places in government. And it's defended because people kind of like the idea that that's acceptable because it makes it more acceptable for them.

And in condemning someone in a high office who has done something wrong, it winds up being self-condemnation because it's very acceptable in the culture. So how can you condemn it in your leaders when you find ways to rationalize it for yourself? So people want to eliminate that there's any shame involved. Well, that's understandable.

That's reasonable, of course, and so on. So, that's why it says in verse 5, the unjust knows no shame. There's not even any guilt or recognition of wrongdoing.

I have cut off nations. Their fortresses are devastated, He says in verse 6 of Zephaniah 3, I have made their streets desolate with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed.

There is no one, no inhabitant. I said, surely you will fear me. You will receive my instruction.

So that her dwelling would not be cut off despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. No response to warning discipline.

No response to the call to repent, the call to turn. Verse 8, Therefore, wait for me, says the Lord, until the day I rise up for plunder. My determination is to gather the nations to my assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them my indignation, all my fierce anger.

All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. Remember another place in Scripture that says once more God will judge the earth? He judged it once at the flood. He said, I'll never again destroy it by a flood.

But the Scripture, God says, once more I will judge the earth. And this is that judgment. When there will be a universal judgment on all the nations along the lines of the flood.

But this is not a baptism of water. This is a baptism of fire. There you have it, the end of history.

All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy, he says. Then, after this purge, what's going to happen? Look at verse 9. For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language. Literally, this is a pure lip.

And also in Genesis, the same phrase here. The lip is used as a figure of speech for language. I will restore to the peoples.

You have many peoples, but you have one language. God is going to, in the future, it's all going to be one language. It will be back to the way it was before the Tower of Babel.

I will restore to the peoples a pure language. Why? So that they all may call on the name of the Lord to serve Him with one accord. Why were the languages confused? Because the united peoples did not have this attitude.

They did not unite to call on the name of the Lord and to serve Him with one accord. Instead, they united in opposition to the divine plan, in opposition to the divine mandate, to serve themselves. To make a name for themselves.

Not to call on the name of the Lord. So you have this contrast. And this is going to be reversed.

This is where that problem is ultimately going to be fixed. God will purge the human race with the judgment of fire. And those who go forward into the kingdom will be restored to a pure language so that they all may call on the name of the Lord to serve Him with one accord.

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against me. For then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride.

We've talked in other studies about the new covenant to Israel. God says, in that day I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will cut out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

I will pour out my Spirit on them and so forth. And people have said, well, this is God changing the hearts of individual people. Not at all.

He says this is the covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah. It is the house of Israel that will have the heart of stone cut out and the heart of flesh will beat in the breast of that nation. This is a description of how that is done.

I will take away from your midst, from your heart, those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they shall feed their flocks and lie down and no one shall make them afraid.

So this is the regathering, the judgment of the earth, the millennial kingdom in which the nations, having been purged, are regathered. National Israel, having been purged and regathered, goes forward and is restored to a pure language so that with one accord

they call on the name of the Lord. This, of course, is at the beginning.

You are going to have a gradual development of the last great opposition to God toward the end of that period. But this is how it begins. And even from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, this is getting off into your outer perimeter Hamites in Ethiopia, your Cushites, and off into your Japhethites who are beyond in the coastland regions of what was then the known world.

These are all going to be regathered. So you have an interesting reflection in Zephaniah of what began over in Genesis chapter 11. So God says, Indeed, the people are one.

They all have one language. And this is what they begin to do. What is their purpose? If they had all gathered in one place and said, let us build an altar to the Lord the way Noah did, let us be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth as God has commanded, there would have been no tower of Babel judgment.

But it is their purpose. It's the thought and intent for which they do these things that brings them into the crosshairs of God's action here. But isn't it interesting what God says in verse 6 of chapter 11 of Genesis? The Lord said, Indeed, the people are one.

They all have one language. And this is what they begin to do. The tower and the city.

They want to unite. They want to make a name. They want to prevent themselves from dispersing.

They want to put their confidence in their numbers, in their strength, in their unity. And this is the flip side of pride. When you have pride, you have hubris, you have this great self-reliance, this great sense of independence.

With that, always, and you can see this in individuals as well as in the national sense here, always when you find someone that is often admired even for being fiercely independent and self-sufficient and so forth, always along with that comes insecurity. Fear of loss. Fear of being toppled.

Fear of being dislodged. And that very need for self-sufficiency and that pride of accomplishment carries with it, as the flip side of the coin, insecurity. Lest we be scattered.

We don't want to be scattered. We're afraid of being scattered. We want to stick together.

As Ben Franklin said, let us all hang together or we shall certainly all hang separately. So there is a built-in curse in this pride in that it has as an intrinsic component insecurity and fear. The more you accomplish, the more afraid you are of losing it.

The more you build a name for yourself, the greater is your insecurity that it won't last or

that it's going to be eroded or taken away. This statement that God makes in the end of verse 6, now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. It sounds as though God is saying, well, if they unite like this, it sounds almost like God is afraid.

If I leave them united like this, they can do anything. They're going to get out of hand. I won't be able to control them.

I've got to scatter them before they get out of hand. And that's really not it at all. Turn with me back to Genesis 3, verse 22.

After the fall, after the pronouncing of the various curses, after the tunics that are made for Adam and Eve out of skin, the Lord God said in Genesis 3, 22, Behold, the man has become like one of us to know good and evil. Now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. This is another case where we have one of these divine pronouncements where it sounds like, well, God says, I've got to do something or man is going to get out of hand.

Man is going to do something that I won't be able to control or won't be able to deal with. But we know in that case that this is not God's fear that something is going to be beyond His control. Rather, it is an observation of the necessity to make a change in the structure of things, to make a change in the arrangement of things because of what man has done.

Because man knows good and evil, because he may put out his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever, a change needs to be made. It is not appropriate for fallen man to sustain his physical life indefinitely. It is a curse to live too long on this earth in a fallen state with a corrupt body in a corrupt environment.

It is a curse. People who arrive at advanced old age are often very happy to check out. Some of them wonder why they've lasted as long as they have.

It is not a good thing to be sustained indefinitely in a corrupt state. It is actually a blessing. It is God turning cursing to blessing that this physical life doesn't last forever.

It gives us a little bit different perspective on longevity and on the preoccupation and the absolute obsession with staying alive that we have, especially in our culture today with medical ability and so forth. People believe that death is the worst thing that can happen to you. Anything is better than death.

Compromise is better than death. Betrayal is better than death. Anything is better than death.

Nothing is worth dying for. When, in fact, God says physical death is a necessary thing to not be sustained too long in this sinful life, it's not good for the man to be able to reach out and perpetuate his life indefinitely in this fallen state. So God made a change.

And even in the midst of the curse, that curse of returning to the dust is a blessing because we don't... There used to be speculation that the Apostle John, the words that Jesus says toward the end there, what is it to you if he should remain until I come? There are people that thought, well, you know, John may still be alive. Maybe he's still over there in the Middle East someplace. He's been alive for 1900 and some odd years now.

And Jesus just decided he would live all the way through the church age. Well, what a tremendous curse on John. Would you really want to see over and over and over again the depravity and the sinfulness and the degeneracy of the human race? One lifetime is enough.

Your three score and ten really is sufficient to accomplish God's purpose. Well, in the same way, when you get over here to chapter 11, and God says now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them, what is it that they're proposing to do? They're not proposing anything that's beyond their reach. They're proposing to build things out of mud bricks.

And anything they decide to do, they're thinking in strictly human terms. And they can just go on setting human goals. They can go on finding justification for staying unified and staying together.

They can propose, well, now that we've built one tower, let's build another. Now that we've built one city, let's build another. Now let's do a sewer system.

Now let's build an aqueduct. Now let's build this and build that. Nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.

They're going to focus constantly on their obsession with unity and their obsession with their name, their reputation. It is going to be a bad thing if this continues. It isn't something that God can't control, but it is not good for man.

It's not good for man to be unified and to be constantly seeking his own goals and having no awareness of the divine design. So God says in verse 7, Come, let us go down, and dare confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech. There's some question about, well, why does he say let us go down in verse 7 if it says he already went down in verse 5? Well, maybe he came down and looked and went back up and thought about it, so to speak.

It's also possible in the Hebrew to see this as co... as happening at the same time. You can't think of what comes after co for that coterminous or whatever. They happen at the same time.

When the Lord comes down to see the city and the tower, He already knows about the city and the tower before He comes down because that's what He goes down to see. And as He goes, He is saying, you know, the Lord came down saying is another way of

translating this if you compact it all together. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower saying, Come, let us go down and dare confuse their language.

Now notice, this is not a very severe judgment. Nobody dies here. There is no curse pronounced.

There is no real severity in this judgment like there was in the flood, like there is no... All God does is thwart their purpose with a relatively painless application of the solution. It doesn't really even say that He invented a bunch of new languages. It just made the language they were speaking unintelligible to each other.

It could just be that their pronunciation changed so badly that no one... You know, there are people from some places in the United States you can't understand what they are saying and they are speaking English. But certainly this is the origination of the languages. Their languages are confounded.

I've heard some funny stories about this illustrating what it must have been like. But, let us go down and confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech. They are engaged in this lofty, ambitious, prideful, self-confident, hubris activity down here.

God goes down and says, watch this. He just makes one not understand another and the whole thing unravels. This great, grandiose project of the entire human race.

You get the idea of putting a man on the moon or the space station. Some of the great universal projects that we are starting to try to undertake. The Internet is worldwide.

They are trying to get a common currency throughout the world on the model of the European Common Market and so forth. To God, this isn't even a bug speck on a windshield. He goes down and you can almost see him laughing at the insignificance.

He has to come down to even see it. And he says, as though this is some great threat to the divine design, he says, well, I'll change a few nouns and verbs here and the whole thing completely unravels. And because of that, they are scattered over the face of all the earth and they cease building the city.

Notice the city is not destroyed, but it is not built any further. The city remains. Babel becomes Babylon all down through history.

But this is such a great letting of air out of the big Babylonian balloon of how great they are and what an original archetype city and tower that they have. And you can see the bracketing here because look for example at verse 1. The whole earth had one language and one speech. And in verse 9, the Lord confused the language of all the earth and from there, the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

In verse 2, they journeyed from the east, they found the plain and the land of Shinar and dwelt there. But in verse 8, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth and they ceased building the city. You look at verse 3, they say, come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.

They had brick for stone and asphalt for mortar. They say, come, let us make bricks. In verse 7, God says, come, let us go down and confuse their language.

In verse 4, they say, come, let us build ourselves a city, a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. And instead, the exact opposite happens.

Their worst fear comes upon them. And you see this as the divine pattern throughout history. Romans chapter 1, God gives you over to the very thing that you choose.

And often it has the opposite result. The fruit of forbidden desire turns to ashes in one's mouth. The thing you think will make you happiest turns out making you most miserable.

This building of the city and desire for unity results in their being scattered and divided. So there's a wonderful irony here that is illustrated in this. You can see it very greatly in the Hebrew.

Let me just read you a little footnote from an article by Dr. Alan Ross who was in turn quoting an obscure guy named J.P. Fogelman. But in verse 1, you have the strong statement of one language for the race. In verse 9, Yahweh confuses them.

In verse 3, they spoke to one another. But in verse 7, they were not able to understand one another. In verses 3 and 4, you have the workers let us make bricks, let us build.

In verse 7, you have Yahweh with his double cohortative, let us go down and see, let us go down and confuse. So you have the human effort juxtaposed with the divine let us. In verse 4, the people wish a tower in the heavens.

And in verse 7, Yahweh comes down from heaven. In verse 4, they desire a name. In verse 9, the name is called Babel.

Confusion. They desired a name for themselves and they got it. Their name is Babel.

Confusion. In verse 4, they fear scattering. In verse 8, they are scattered.

So I thought that was a nice summary of those observations. And it is a reminder once again because this scripture helps Israel as a nation as they go into the land and they hear the mythology. This area is saturated with Mesopotamian philosophy, Mesopotamian legends and thought.

In Genesis, from beginning to end is a reminder to the people of Israel that there is a

truth that far supersedes these man-made, man-glorifying myths and legends. This is the way it really is. This is Paul Harvey with the rest of the story.

Yes, there was an original city. Yes, there was a tower. But here is how it really came about.

And it completely flattens the pride of man and shows Israel their place in God's plan and in human history. And the Bible does that for us. You can think about the truth of the Word of God that helps us understand who to associate with, who to be wary of, who to be on our guard with.

You have your doctrines of separation. You have your doctrine of let he who does not work not eat. And don't sit down to table with someone who is contrary, someone who is divisive.

You move back from those who start to follow the pattern that leads to cursing. And you make your alliances and you build your friendships and maintain your fellowship with those who are on the same path that you're on, who are seeking to please God. This pattern is at the macro and the micro level in Scripture.

It's at the beginning and it's the end of everything. It all depends on attitude toward God. The Shemites, the Japhethites are pictured here as those who are under the blessing of God.

The Hamites, this is not determinative because you have Hamites. You have the Queen of Sheba coming up from the south. You have the Jebusites.

You have the Gibeonites. You have others throughout Scripture who are wonderful exceptions. Rahab is a Canaanite.

Ruth is a Moabite. You have many of these who are exceptions because it doesn't depend on your past or your genetic history. It depends on your attitude.

You can alleviate, you can get out from under any of these patterns through faith. You can be the great exception through faith. Everything depends on what we choose.

We look at these examples at the larger scale of national and group action in human history to see the patterns that pertain in our individual lives as well. We need to close here. We'll resume next time with the genealogy of Shem in chapter 11, verse 10.

We'll get all the way to the beginnings of the career of Abraham. This will advance us quite a bit forward in our study of Genesis. Let's close here in prayer.

We thank You, Father, for the privilege of studying Your Word and for the light that it sheds on our lives and our place in Your plan. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate...

