

Genesis – Lesson 10

An Introduction to Part 2

Read Genesis 11:10-32, Acts 7:2-8

1. (a) Write a brief *biography* of Abram from Genesis 11 and Acts 7.

Abram was a child of Terah, who was 70 years old when Abram was born; his brothers were Nahor and Haran. He was raised in Ur of the Chaldeans (in Mesopotamia), and married Sarai; his brother Nahor married Milcah (his niece?). Abram's brother Haran died in Ur. At some point after Haran's death, Terah attempted to move his family to Canaan (after God had appeared to Abram there), but settled in the land of Haran, where Terah died at the age of 205. Abram then completed the journey of his father to Canaan, and God met with Abram there giving him the land as an inheritance and the promise of a great nation to come from him, a nation that would be enslaved for 400 years, but then released to worship God in that land.

- (b) According to Joshua 24:2, what kind of *religious* heritage did Abram have?

Abram and his family were *pagans*; they worshipped the various gods of Mesopotamia before Yahweh intervened and called them to Canaan.

- (c) How many *generations* from Noah was Terah? Which *son* of Noah did Terah trace his lineage from? *Why* was this important?

The generations from Shem to Terah included: Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah; this means that Terah was 8 generations down from Shem (notice the generally *declining* ages of this lineage). It was important that Abram was descended from Shem because the *other* sons of Noah were the ancestors of the various nations that came *against* Israel throughout their history; the Israelites could be assured that they were *not* related to these other nations, and would be perfectly justified to obey God and do with them as He pleased.

- (d) What is *different* in the genealogy of Genesis 11:10-26 as compared to Genesis 5? *Why*?

There is *no* mention of the sad refrain "*and he died*" behind each name, although the death of each patriarch is implied. In the genealogy of chapter 5, the *end result* is the flood, the judgment of God upon the entire race. Thus, the refrain serves to remind the reader that the awful judgment of God upon sin is death. However, in chapter 11, the *lack* of this refrain points to the *positive* goal of God calling out the patriarch Abram, and it looks *forward* to the promises of God that will be fulfilled in him.

2. (a) What *relationship* was Lot to Abram? What do you learn about *Sarai* from Genesis 11?

Lot was Abram's *nephew*, the son of Abram's brother Haran who had died while the family was still in Ur. Sarai, according to chapter 11, was barren, and did not produce an heir for Abram at any point while the family was either in Ur or in Haran.

- (b) From Genesis 11:28 and 32, *why* did Abram bring Lot with him to Canaan?

It would appear the Abram took over the *patriarchal care* for Lot, his nephew, after both his brother and his father died. It would appear that Nahor *remained* in Ur when Terah took Abram, Sarai, and Lot to Haran (see v. 31); therefore, once Terah dies there, the responsibility to raise Lot fell to Abram.

Read Genesis 12:1-5

3. (a) According to Genesis 11:31, *who* moved the family from Ur? Speculate on *why* this may be so.

From this verse, it appears that *Terah* was responsible for moving the family to Haran, settling there instead of completing the journey to Canaan. However, the account in Acts 7 tells us that God had appeared to *Abram* while the family was still in Ur. So, it is possible that either 1) Terah had been convinced by Abram to move the family to Canaan, but was unable and/or unwilling to complete the journey, stopping in Haran, 2) decided on his own to move the family in that direction, unaware of Abram's visit from God, due to some other reason (e.g. a famine in the area), or 3) the visit of God to Abram spoken of by Stephen was not a *specific* revelation of God to Abram in Ur, but a general call upon him that became more direct once Abram reached Haran (see 3b below).

- (b) Compare Genesis 12:1 to Acts 7:2-4. How many *times* and from *where* did God call Abram?

It would appear from these texts that God interacted with Abram three (3) times: once while still in Ur (Acts 7:2-3), once while in Haran (Genesis 12:1), and again when Abram arrived in Canaan (Acts 7:6). However, the first two could be a *single* call made by God while he was still in Ur: Genesis 12:1 can be translated "*now the Lord had said*" (implying that this is only a repetition by the author of the *initial* calling in Ur).

- (c) From Genesis 12:2-3, list the specific *promises* made to Abram. Which one would be a *fulfillment* of the "seed" of Genesis 3:15 (see Galatians 3:8 for help)?

God makes the following promises to Abram: 1) God would make of Abram a "*great nation*," meaning that he would have a nation spring from his descendants, 2) God would make Abram's name "*great*," meaning that his name would be known down through history, 3) God would make Abram a "*blessing*," to the world, meaning that the work of God through his offspring would bring God's grace upon the world, and 4) God would bless "*all the families of the earth*" through him, meaning that God's grace would be extended from his descendants to every nation of the earth. Ultimately, *all of them* would be the basis for the fulfillment of the "seed" prophecy, but it is this *last* one that is the most *specific* in that regards: the promised *One* who would come would bring in himself the grace of God that would go out from the descendants of Abram to every person blessed by God.

Read Hebrews 11:8-10; Romans 4:16-22; Galatians 3:6-9

4. (a) Write a definition of *faith* (see Hebrews 11:1 for help). From these passages, list some of the things that Abraham did to *demonstrate* that he was a man of faith?

Faith is the *radical* trust in God that is willing to see that which "is not" as though "it is" in the promises of God. It is an "*assurance*" of that which is only yet "*hoped for*" because it has not yet come to pass (although it is promised), and it is a "*conviction*" of things not yet "*seen*" (because it has not been given). Abraham trusted in God's promises to him, and this trust in God caused him to: 1) leave Ur and go to Canaan, 2) settle in a land that was unfamiliar to him, living in tents as a wanderer without a permanent home, 3) believe that he could have a son even after his child-bearing years were physically over, and 4) assume that God would raise Isaac from the dead after he carried out the command to kill the child.

(b) From Galatians 3:8, what does Paul *mean* when he says that God “*preached the gospel beforehand*” to Abraham? What does this tell us about *salvation* in the Old Testament?

The gospel is the “good news” that God has made a way for rebellious sinners to be made right with God and enjoy fellowship with him forever. The gospel is a *message*: a message of hope that, in spite of our sin, God has purposed our salvation and then carried it out in the person and work of Jesus Christ. All those who, then, believe that promise of God to save those who are willing to trust him (rather than in something else) are rescued from God’s judgment and adopted as his own sons and daughters. This message was the same one given to Abraham: God gave *promises* to Abraham, and Abraham *believed* God. Thus, Abraham was *justified* before God by his willingness to take God at his word and abandon *everything else* to be included in God’s plans. To Paul, the gospel is the *universal* message of salvation (see 5 below); it is not limited to those who lived *after* the Cross, but is available to everyone who will come to the promises of God and believe them. Abraham did not know *how* God would carry out this work of salvation; he simply had to believe that God would bless all nations through his offspring. We, also, must believe God *just as Abraham did*. In our case, we are fully *aware* of how God’s plan finally unfolds, and we must believe that God has accomplished this per his plans. But (in both cases) the *essence* of salvation is a willingness to believe *God*.

5. Why does Paul use Abraham as a great *example* of faith (see Romans 4:23-25)?

According to Paul, Abraham stands as the great *example* of faith that should be present in all of those who are justified. Justification is *universally* granted by God to everyone who trusts in the promises of God *as Abraham did*. Such people, those with *genuine* faith in God, will demonstrate this faith in their lives *as he did*. They will stand firm in their conviction that God *will* do what he has promised (as evidenced by the resurrection of Jesus), and they will be justified in the sight of God and live lives that demonstrate that faith in faithfulness, just as he did.