

The Lord Gave the Genealogy from Shem to Abram

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how God confused the language on the earth at the Tower of Babel. This change did not affect heaven, as we saw that people of all nations, tribes, people, and tongues will be able to worship the Lord together because there is no confusion of language in heaven. In this topic, we will see that God called Abraham to form a new nation.

The Tower of Babel showed that the hearts of mankind continued to be filled with evil, even though mankind had seen the world destroyed by the flood. God had planned before the creation of the world that Christ would come one day to pay the penalty for sin. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Then, Ephesians 1:7 adds, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” In order for Christ to buy us back from sin, there had to be a godly line through which Christ could come. As a result, Genesis 11 gives the family line, from Shem to Abraham, through which Christ would one day come.

First, we are given the line from Shem to the confusion of language. Genesis 11:10-17 says, “This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem *was* one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood. After he begot Arphaxad, Shem lived five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot Salah. After he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. Salah lived thirty years, and begot Eber. After he begot Eber, Salah lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg. After he begot Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters.” In this genealogy, we see that Shem had a son who was born two years after the flood, named Arphaxad. According to Genesis 10:22, Shem had a total of five sons, “The sons of Shem *were* Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.” However, this was the son from which Christ would one day come.

From this list, we see that there were five individuals listed from Shem to the confusion of the language – Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber and Peleg. In Genesis 10, the genealogies showed that the three sons of Noah together had a total of sixteen sons. Then, each of those sons had several sons. This continued for three more generations. As a result, the earth had quite a number of people on it by the time of Peleg. Then, Genesis 10:25 says, “To Eber were born two sons: the name of one *was* Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name *was* Joktan.” The word translated “divided” means *split or divided* and is used four times in the Old Testament. 1 Chronicles 1:19 gives the same genealogy that is given in Genesis 10:25. God uses the word as He questions Job, in Job 38:25, where we read, “Who has divided a channel for the overflowing *water*, or a path for the thunderbolt?” When David was being oppressed by the wicked, he said in Psalm 55:9, “Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city.” The word translated “destroy” in this verse could also be translated “confuse” and may refer to the confusion of language in Genesis 11.

The second part of this list takes us from Peleg and the confusion of the language, to Terah, the

father of Abram (later changed to Abraham). Genesis 11:18-26 says, “Peleg lived thirty years, and begot Reu. After he begot Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters. Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug. After he begot Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters. Serug lived thirty years, and begot Nahor. After he begot Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah. After he begot Terah, Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years, and begot sons and daughters. Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” From this list, we see six individuals listed from Peleg to Abram – Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abram. Throughout this list, we see that in addition to the son who carried on the future line of Christ, there were other sons and daughters born to these men as the population of the earth continued to grow.

Although Terah was the father of Abram, he was not a worshiper of the true and living God who created the heavens and the earth. Joshua 24:2 says, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.’”” Here, we see that Terah and his family were serving other gods at the time God called Abram.

By reading several other verses, we see that Terah became a father when he was seventy years old, but that Abram was not his oldest son. Genesis 11:32 says, “So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.” Genesis 12:4 says, “So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.” Acts 7:2-4 says, “And he said, ‘Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, “Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.” Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.’” This meant that Terah was a hundred and thirty at the time Abram was born. Haran was probably the oldest son, as he died in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans before Terah, Nahor, and Abram moved to Haran.

When we get to Genesis 12, we will see that God had called Abram while he was still in the land of Ur. Genesis 12:1 says, “Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.’” This meant that Abram had learned about God sometime before he left Ur of the Chaldeans, even though his father worshiped other gods. Hebrews 11:8 says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” Here, we see that Abram demonstrated that his faith was in God by leaving the land where he had grown up, even though he had no idea where God was going to take him.

However, part of the family moved with Abram, as Genesis 11:27-32 says, “This *is* the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years,

and Terah died in Haran.” In these verses, we see that Haran, one of the brothers of Abram, died while the family was still in the land of Ur. However, before he died, his wife gave birth to a son and two daughters. The name of the son was Lot and the daughters were Milcah and Iscah.

In these verses, we see that Abram and Nahor were married before they left the land of Ur of the Chaldeans. We see that Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of his older brother, Haran. Later, we see that Nahor and Milcah eventually had eight children. Genesis 22:20-22 says, “Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, ‘Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.’” Abram married Sarai, but she did not have any children. We learn later in Genesis that Abram was married to his half-sister. Genesis 20:12 says, “‘But indeed *she* is truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.’” Here, we see at this time, they could still marry close relatives. That was not changed until the law was given to Israel at the time of Moses.

Haran had died in the land of Ur, so Terah, Nahor and Abram took his son, Lot, with them when they left the land of Ur. They were on their way to Canaan but stopped at a place named Haran and lived there until the death of Terah. We saw in a previous paragraph that God had called Abram and told him to leave his country and go to a land that God would show him. He had also been told to leave his relatives. However, part of his family had gone along with him as he left to go to the land of Canaan. That may have been why they stopped in Haran for a period of years until Terah died. Nahor also chose to stay in Haran, which would become important in the future for the family of Abram. However, it was important for Abram to separate from his family because they were still idol worshippers, as is seen later in the book of Genesis.

The city of Haran was northeast of the land of Canaan near the Euphrates River. They had traveled along the Euphrates River as they moved toward Canaan because that provided water and grass for their cattle and flocks as they traveled. A more direct route across the desert would not have provided water and grass for the animals. As a result, we see that God was leading Abram and he was moving in the direction that God was leading him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and be able to explain that God called Abram out of a city and family that were idol worshippers and called him to go to a new land where he could worship God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.