

Genesis 11B (2011)

- Many scholars have observed that the book of Genesis can be divided neatly into two parts
 - The first part of the book runs from Chapter 1-11
 - It covers the origins of the universe, the earth, mankind and all the nations
 - It explains the origins of sin, the origins of nations, languages and government
 - It establishes the problem: man's rebellion against God
 - The second part of the book runs from Chapters 12-50
 - It covers the origins of the nation of Israel, beginning with Abraham
 - It explains the outworking of God to fulfill His promise to bring a Messiah
 - And it shows how Israel as a people become the mechanism for God to deliver His Redeemer
 - In the first part of Genesis, men are seen to be losing ground
 - They receive curses, are displaced from their land, lose privileges, are expelled from God's presence
 - In the second part of Genesis, men are receiving blessing
 - Visitations from God, promises to receive land, promises to be in God's kingdom
- Today we stand at the juncture of these two parts
 - We are finishing the first half
 - Having just seen the development of nations and the languages
 - And now to conclude, we examine the *toldat* or genealogy of the line of the seed promise: Shem
 - Shem's line will connect us from Noah's family to the next major character in the story of God's plan of redemption: Abram

- Even as God confused language and scattered mankind, His promise was still intact and working through the families of Noah
 - Specifically, the family of Shem carries the promise forward and into the next installment of the story

[Gen. 11:10](#) These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;
[Gen. 11:11](#) and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:12](#) Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah;
[Gen. 11:13](#) and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:14](#) Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber;
[Gen. 11:15](#) and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:16](#) Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg;
[Gen. 11:17](#) and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:18](#) Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu;
[Gen. 11:19](#) and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:20](#) Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug;
[Gen. 11:21](#) and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:22](#) Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor;
[Gen. 11:23](#) and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:24](#) Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah;
[Gen. 11:25](#) and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters.
[Gen. 11:26](#) Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

- In looking at this list of names, we have three observations to consider
- First, we find ten generations between Shem and Abram
 - Like all genealogy lists in Genesis, the point of the list is to trace the seed line
 - In this case the line between Shem and Abram, since Abram becomes the next character in the line of the promise

- But curiously, the previous genealogy in Chapter 5 also included ten generations between Adam and Noah
 - This similarity isn't coincidence
 - God has purposed to place ten names between these men to emphasize His hand and authority over all these outcomes
- The number 10 in Scripture is the number of testimony, as in a testimony to God's faithfulness to His promises
 - So how appropriate that God waits ten generations before beginning the next step in His plan of redemption
 - The next time you wonder if God is still at work in your life, remember that He waited hundreds of years before acting anew just to ensure He could communicate through a "10"
 - God's patience exceeds our own, and yet we can find patience by understanding and recognizing God's patterns from His word
 - He moves in deliberate and purposeful ways, all the while remaining in control and bringing all things to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
- Secondly, the overlapping lives of these men assures us that the history recorded in Genesis was easily passed along to later generations and preserved for Moses to record
 - The lives of only four men link the beginning of time to Jacob's life
 - Adam, Lamech, Shem and Jacob
 - Each man in the list was still alive when the next man was an adult
 - In fact, Noah lived until Abram's father, Terah, was alive
 - Shem and Eber outlived Terah
 - Eber outlived Abraham
- Finally, the list emphasizes the separating effect of God's seed promise
 - As we discussed last week, God is in the business of selecting who will receive His grace

- And God's seed promise is a grace He elects to bring to certain lines of men, but not to others
- And that choice is evident in the outworking of the events of their lives
- And it's reflected in the genealogies of Genesis
- For example, we taught back in Chapter 10 that the genealogy in that chapter accounts for the names that were not to receive the promise
 - These are the families that disappear from the pages of Scripture, since they don't matter to the ultimate story of the fulfillment of God's promise
- But in particular take note of the families of Eber, the man who gave his name to the Hebrews
 - He had two sons: Peleg and Joktan
 - And in Chapter 10 we're told that Peleg was born in the days when the earth was divided, referring to the dividing of men at the tower of Babel
- The narrative of Genesis gives a higher meaning to that reference of division
- The descendants of Noah are traced twice: in Chapters 10 & 11
 - In Chapter 10 we see Eber's family dividing into two people, Peleg and Joktan
 - For the remainder of Chapter 10, the line of Joktan is told
 - Culminating in the rebellion at the Tower of Babel
 - In Chapter 11 the line is traced a second time, but this time we focus on the line of Peleg
 - And his line ends in Abram
- The message of the genealogies of 10 & 11 seems clear
 - God divided the earth in more ways than one
 - While He divided the nations by confusing the languages, He was also dividing Eber's family

- Joktan's line leads to the story of the Tower and away from the promises of God
- Peleg's line in Chapter 11 moves away from the story of the Tower and toward the promised seed, realized in the line of Hebrews through Abraham
- Let's be clear on the purposes of God in Genesis
 - God created, man polluted and God cleansed
 - And since God is the One fixing man's mistake, God may take any route He chooses
 - The story of Genesis is the tracing of that route through certain men, and apart from others
- Today, God continues to work in exactly the same way
 - The outworking of God's promise to redeem men from sin has reached its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - And as Jesus Himself said, He didn't come to unify mankind:

[Luke 12:51](#) "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

[Luke 12:52](#) for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

[Luke 12:53](#) "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

- The only question worth asking is, which side are we on?
 - Are we with the line of the seed promise: Seth, Noah, Shem, Eber, Peleg and Abram all the way to Jesus?
 - Or are we with the rebels? Are we like Cain, Lamech, Canaan, Nimrod, Joktan?
- We only get two options, because there is no third category
 - And our family tree divides on the question of who we say Jesus is
 - As Jesus said Himself:

[Luke 8:20](#) And it was reported to Him, “Your **mother** and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”

[Luke 8:21](#) But He answered and said to them, “My **mother** and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

- Now we turn the corner of part 1 in Genesis and start part 2

[Gen. 11:27](#) Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.

[Gen. 11:28](#) Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

[Gen. 11:29](#) Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

[Gen. 11:30](#) Sarai was barren; she had no child.

- This is the central *toldat* of the book of Genesis
 - There are five *toldats* before it, and five after it
 - It serves as the turning point, the moment when God begins to move the course of human history back toward Himself
 - This *toldat* introduces the first of the patriarchs of Israel
 - Each of these men – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – will receive greater and greater revelation concerning the promise to bring a redeemer
 - And each man will receive a small portion of the promise in their earthly life
 - Yet as we will study, each man died looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s promises in a future life
- The first of these patriarchs is Abram, the son of Terah
 - He has two brothers, Nahor and Haran
 - His brother Nahor seems to have been named after his grandfather
 - While Haran is named after his father’s home town
 - By the time Abram is born, his father had moved from Haran to Ur, a city in Mesopotamia

- Ur was a significant city historically
 - Moses calls it Ur of the Chaldeans, but the Chaldeans didn't occupy this area until over 1,000 years later
 - Moses probably included the reference to the Chaldeans to help identify the location of Ur for his readers
 - Ur had a population of roughly 34,000 and occupied about 4 square miles at the time of Terah
 - The city had walls 35 feet thick, which tells us that the fear and confusion created at the Tower has now led to violence and wars
 - There is archeological evidence that the city had harbors on the Euphrates and traded with other people in the north, and in Africa
 - But in BC 2180, everything changes for the prosperous town
 - War-like barbarians called Guti descended from the Eastern mountains and conquer Ur
 - They make life miserable for the inhabitants of Ur for nearly a century
 - In BC 2166, 14 years after the invasion, Terah begins to have children, including Abram
 - Abram and his brothers grow up in an occupied city
- Terah and his son Abram were appointed to the line of the seed promise, but this doesn't mean they were always faithful followers of God
 - In fact, there is no evidence that Terah ever knew the true God
 - Joshua tells us:

[Josh. 24:2](#) Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

[Josh. 24:3](#) 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

- In Genesis 11 we also learn that Haran has a son, Lot

- But the very next verse tells us that Haran died young leaving his son an orphan
 - And this detail becomes important in the next chapter, as we learn that Lot became a member of Abram's family as a result of Haran's death
- Haran dies while the family is still living in Ur, away from the ancestral home in Haran
 - Both the remaining boys take wives
 - But curiously, we learn that Abram's wife is barren and cannot have children
- Sarai's inability is the first of 12 obstacles that Abram will confront in his life story in Genesis
 - Moses expects his readers to understand from the beginning that Abram is the man through whom God will work the next stage of His redemption plan
 - But then immediately Moses presents us with something that stops the story in its tracks
 - How can Abram continue the line of the seed if his wife is barren and can't give birth?
 - We're intrigued to see how Abram overcomes this obstacle
 - Looking ahead, we'll also wonder how Abram will receive land in a place occupied by other people?
 - How will Abram rescue his son from God's instructions to sacrifice him?
 - What we come to find for each of these obstacles is that Abram's success is provided by God Himself
 - God gives Abram the means to overcome each of these challenges
 - And that, in the end, even the obstacles themselves find their source in God, as tests of Abram's character and faith
 - Abram doesn't always pass these tests

- But he always stands in the end because God remains true to His promises
 - Such is the God we serve, that even when we are faithless, He remains faithful
- Finally, let's end the chapter

Gen. 11:31 Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

Gen. 11:32 The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

- We're told that Terah takes his son Abram, Lot and Sarai out of Ur and heads to the land of Canaan
 - But they get only about half way when they reach Haran and then Terah settles there
 - While in Haran, Terah dies
 - Moses doesn't address in Chapter 11 why the family leaves or what happened to the other brother Nahor
 - But he deals with both loose ends in the coming chapters
 - In particular Moses quickly comes to answer the question of why the family departs their home in Ur
 - And even before we venture into Chapter 12, we can look at the New Testament for the answer
 - Stephen gives us the answer in his discourse in Acts:

Acts 7:2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

Acts 7:3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

Acts 7:4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

- The order of events begins with a revelation from God while in Ur, which directed Abram's family in their movement westward

- After Terah's passing, God appears again and directs them into the land of Canaan
- Moving from east to west, Abram sets out for the promised land, bringing his wife, nephew and father with him
 - The family of the seed promise moves as God directs
 - The details of this call and the movement of the family will begin to emerge next week and in the coming chapters
 - But how exciting is it to know that we serve a God Who has made it His practice to call men out of obscurity to serve Him?
 - He brings men and women from east and sends them west
 - He rescues us from idol worship and spiritual ignorance and He grants us the privilege of knowing the Creator personally
 - He loves us while we are yet still a part of the world, His enemy and He adopts us into His family
 - He redeems us from our own sin and sets us on a journey to learn and serve and proclaim His Name and glory to the world
 - And He started with one man, Abram