
GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 11:10-12:9

10 These are the generations of *Shem*. (a summary of 11:10-26)

Shem fathered Arpachshad; Arpachshad fathered Shelah; Shelah fathered Eber; Eber fathered Peleg; Peleg fathered Reu; Reu fathered Serug; Serug fathered Nahor; Nahor fathered Terah; Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

27 Now these are the generations of *Terah*.

Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. 28 Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

29 And 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 Iscah.

30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

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 forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. 32 The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 **Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said,** *"To your offspring I will give this land."* So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

INTRODUCTION

In Abram, God provides a beginning of blessing for all future generations. Interestingly, Abram is a picture of trust and obedience, both because he is quite ordinary and because he is exemplary. Abram, like all who hear the promise of God, was called out from among a worldly people to an eternal blessing that could not be measured. Just as Abram imperfectly trusted and obeyed God's command of promise, so too are we called to walk in like manner. Our response to God's Word is eternally decisive, and Abram helps us see what a right response looks like.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) GOD CHOSE A NOBODY FROM NOWHERE, WHO WAS LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE**
- (2) GOD DEMANDED & DESERVED COMPLETE TRUST & OBEDIENCE**
- (3) MANY PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED VARYINGLY TO GOD'S WORD**
- (4) GOD DEMANDS & DESERVES COMPLETE TRUST & OBEDIENCE FROM YOU**

EXPOSITION:

(1) GOD CHOSE A NOBODY FROM NOWHERE, WHO WAS LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE

◆ ABRAM WAS A NOBODY

- His father, Terah, does not seem to be anyone of one of note.
 - Sproul: "After this introduction [Terah] is not mentioned again, probably because he did not share Abraham's faith."¹
- He was not the firstborn among his brothers.
 - This fact is not immediately evident from a cursory reading of the passage, but it is deduced by way of ages and times mentioned.²

¹Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 32). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

²See John Calvin's note on the order of Abram's sonship: "I will now briefly state why I think Abram was not the first-born. Moses shortly afterwards says, that Haran died in his own country, before his father left Chaldea, and went to Charran.¹ But Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Charran to dwell in the land of Canaan.² And this number of seventy-five years is expressly given after the death of Terah. Now, if we suppose that Abram was born in his father's seventieth year, we must also allow that we have lost sixty years of Terah's age; which is most absurd.³ The conjecture of Luther, that God buried that time in oblivion, in order to hide from us the end of the world, in the first place is frivolous, and in the next, may be refuted by solid and convincing arguments. Others violently wrest the

- His wife was a barren woman.
 - *“Abram’s wife was Sarai... Now Sarai was barren; she had no child”* (Gen. 11:29-30).
- His only heir was the son of his dead brother.
 - Haran, Abram’s brother, fathered Lot, and then he died in Ur before Abram left with the rest of his family (Gen. 11:27-28; 12:4).
 - Nahor, Abram’s other brother, took one of Haran’s daughters as a wife; and Nahor fathered several sons (Gen. 22:20).
 - It appears that Abram may have been given Lot as an heir, since his wife, Sarai, was barren and childless (Gen. 11:29-31).

◆ ABRAM WAS FROM NOWHERE

- While Ur was known as the “capital of the world” twice in its long history, it is most likely that God’s call to Abram came during a time when Ur was experiencing a time of political unrest.
 - Egypt was on the incline. In fact, Abram enjoyed the benefits of Egyptian resources when there was a famine (Gen. 12:10).
 - Sumerian kings were also quite powerful during that time. It was a Sumerian who eventually reignited the power of Ur during its 3rd Dynasty.
 - See the following for greater detail:
 - “Twice in its history, during its 1st and 3rd dynasties, Ur was ‘capital of the world.’”³

words to apply them to a former egress; and think that he lived together with his father at Charran for sixty years; which is most improbable. For to what end should they have protracted their stay so long in the midst of their journey? But there is no need of laborious discussion. Moses is silent respecting the age of Abraham when he left his own country; but says, that in the seventy-fifth year of his age, he came into the land of Canaan, when his father, having reached the two hundredth and fifth year of his life, had died. Who will not hence infer that he was born when his father had attained his one hundredth and thirtieth year?¹ But he is named first among those sons whom Terah is said to have begotten, when he himself was seventy years old. I grant it; but this order of recital does nothing towards proving the order of birth, as we have already said. Nor, indeed, does Moses declare in what year of his life Terah begat sons; but only that he had passed the above age before he begat the three sons here mentioned. Therefore, the age of Abraham is to be ascertained by another mode of computation, namely, from the fact that Moses assigns to him the age of seventy-five when his father died, whose life had reached to two hundred and five years. A firm and valid argument is also deduced from the age of Sarai. It appears that she was not more than ten years younger than Abraham. If she was the daughter of his younger brother, she would necessarily have equalled her own father in age.¹ They who raise an objection, to the effect that she was the daughter-in-law, or only the adopted daughter of Nahor, produce nothing beyond a sheer cavil.” *Source*: Calvin, J., & King, J. (2010). *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Vol. 1, pp. 335–337). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

³Lasor, W. S. (1979–1988). Ur. In G. W. Bromiley (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Vol. 4, p. 951). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

- “Ur of the Chaldeans. Probably the important city in southern Mesopotamia on the Euphrates River (flourished c. 3000–1900 B.C.)”⁴
- “It is possible that the migration of Terah and Abraham (Gn. 11:31) took place at this time of change in Ur’s fortune.”⁵

◆ ABRAM WAS LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE

- Abram and his family were from a pagan land.
 - Ur is Babylonia – modern-day Iraq
 - Sproul: “The family may have been involved in moon worship, since Ur and Haran were important centers for worship of the Mesopotamian moon gods *Nanna* and *Sin* (cf. Josh. 24:2).”⁶
- It is probable that Terah halted the family progress away from Ur, only making it as far as Haran, because he was not willing to cut ties with their pagan way of life (Gen. 12:31-32).
 - Joshua 24:2 – “Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, **your fathers** lived beyond the Euphrates, **Terah**, the father of **Abraham** and of Nahor; and **they served other gods.**”
 - Terah, Sarai, Milcah are names related to moon-god worship.

◆ AND YET, GOD’S CHOICE OF ABRAM WAS INTENTIONAL

- God promised of an “offspring” to Eve in Genesis 3:15.
- Cain killed his brother, Abel (Gen. 4:8), but then Eve gave birth to Seth (Gen. 4:25), and during the days of Seth’s son, Enosh, people began to “call on the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26).
- The line from Seth to Noah was traced in Genesis 5, and then everyone on earth is destroyed by a flood except Noah and his immediate family (Gen. 7:6-7). After the water subsides, we see that Shem is to be the “blessed” son among Noah’s children (Gen. 9:26).

⁴Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 32). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

⁵Wiseman, D. J. (1996). Babylonia. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, & J. I. Packer (Eds.), New Bible dictionary (3rd ed., p. 114). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁶Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 32). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

- The line from Shem to Abram was traced in Genesis 11:10-26, and there is a major distinction between this genealogy and that of Genesis 5 (outlining the descent of man from Adam to Noah).
- Finally, we arrive at Abram, through whom “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). God promises to give Abram a great name, a great nation, and a blessed people (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - The author of Hebrews tells us that Abram was looking for the heavenly “city” and the “better country,” whose “designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:8-16).
 - Paul tells us that Abram (Abraham) is the father of all who believe the promise of God to save (Gal. 3:7-9), and that Abram indeed became a conduit of blessing to sinners around the world.

(2) GOD DEMANDED & DESERVED COMPLETE TRUST & OBEDIENCE

◆ CONSIDER WHO GOD IS

- God is GOD!
 - He is Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Giver of Life, King of the universe, Lord of all, and Sovereign Master of everything.
 - Paul, speaking of Christ, says, “**by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:16–17).

◆ CONSIDER WHAT GOD IS OFFERING TO ABRAM

- God offered Abram blessing and life!
 - The difference in genealogies (Gen. 5 & Gen. 11:10-26) – life/blessing
 - “*I will bless you...*” (Gen. 12:2).
 - The Psalmist says, “*1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit... 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD*” (Ps 32:1–2, 10).

(3) MANY PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED VARYINGLY TO GOD'S WORD

◆ IMMEDIATE & ONGOING TRUST/OBEDIENCE

- Abram (Genesis 12:1-4)
 - Sproul: “Abraham’s 1,500-mile journey was fueled by faith. ‘And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land ... For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God’ (Heb. 11:8–10).”⁷
- Simon/Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Matthew 4:18-22)
 - “18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he [Jesus] saw two brothers, **Simon** (who is called **Peter**) and **Andrew** his brother, casting a net into the sea, for **they were fishermen**. 19 And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ 20 **Immediately they left their nets and followed him**. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, **James** the son of Zebedee and **John** his brother, **in the boat with Zebedee their father**, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 **Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him**” (Mt 4:18–22).
- Ethiopian official (Acts 8:30-38)
 - “34 And the eunuch [Ethiopian official] said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and **beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus**. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! **What prevents me from being baptized?**’ 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Ac 8:34–38).

◆ APPEARANCE OF TRUST, BUT NO OBEDIENCE

- Two unnamed “followers / disciples”
 - Matthew 8:19-22 – “And a scribe came up and said to him, ‘Teacher, **I will follow you wherever you go.**’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ **Another of the disciples** said to him, ‘Lord,

⁷Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 32). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

let me first go and bury my father.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘**Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.**”

- A wealthy ruler
 - Luke 18:18-23 – “**And a ruler** asked him, ‘Good Teacher, **what must I do to inherit eternal life?**’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. **You know the commandments:** ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’ ‘ And he said, ‘**All these I have kept from my youth.**’ When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘**One thing you still lack.** Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and **you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.**’ But when he heard these things, **he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.**”

◆ OUTRIGHT REJECTION AND DISOBEDIENCE

- Various hearers of Peter’s message
 - Peter cried out, “**Repent and be baptized... the promise is for you... save yourselves from this crooked generation...**” and only some “**received his word**” (Acts 2:36-41).
- Sadducees / Jewish leaders
 - Some people heard another of Peter’s messages, and they were “**greatly annoyed**” because he was proclaiming a resurrection by way of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:26-4:3).

(4) GOD DEMANDS & DESERVES COMPLETE TRUST & OBEDIENCE FROM YOU

◆ AGAIN, CONSIDER WHO GOD IS

- He is Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Giver of Life, King of the universe, Lord of all, and Sovereign Master of everything.
 - Isaiah 45:22-24 – “**Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. Only in the LORD,’** it shall be said of me, ‘**are righteousness and strength;**’ to him shall come and be **ashamed all who were incensed against him.**”

◆ AND AGAIN, CONSIDER WHAT GOD OFFERS YOU TODAY

- God offers you blessing and life!
 - Revelation 22:12-14 – Jesus said, “Behold, **I am coming soon**, bringing **my recompense with me**, to **repay each one** for what he has done. **I am the Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **first** and the **last**, the **beginning** and the **end**.’ **Blessed are those who wash** their robes, so that they may have the **right to the tree of life** and that they may **enter the city** by the gates.”

◆ WHAT DOES TRUST AND OBEDIENCE LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

- Trust the promise, since He is trustworthy; and Obey/Follow His Word
 - 2 Timothy 1:12-13 – Paul said, “I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and **I am convinced that he is able to guard** until that Day what has been entrusted to me.” Then he tells his disciple, Timothy, “**13 Follow the pattern of the sound** (healthy, trustworthy) **words** that you have heard from me...”

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us and speak blessing to us today.
- May God draw us to Himself and make us to trust His promise of blessing.
- May God work obedience in us, that we may persevere in faith.

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